

MOBILIZING JAZZ COMMUNITIES:  
THE DYNAMIC USE OF JAZZ AS A POLITICAL RESOURCE IN THE BLACK  
LIBERATION STRUGGLE, 1925-1965

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History  
in the Graduate College of the  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2012

Urbana, Illinois

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## **Abstract**

“Mobilizing Jazz Communities” presents a historical examination of the role culture has played in developing and sustaining African American socio-political movements during the twentieth century, and has a particular emphasis on the New Negro and Civil Rights Movements. Informed by the perspectives of social movement theorists describing culture’s significance in the development of sustained collective activism, this study demonstrates how culture, through the example of jazz music, was transformed into an invaluable political resource, and was effectively mobilized by African American political activists as they successfully worked to accomplish a variety of goals.

The historical examples that this study highlights chronicle the political work that jazz performed as movement participants mobilized the music to help fulfill the objectives of the movements in which they were active. I explain, for instance, how New Negro era political organizations including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the American Communist Party (CPUSA), and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) took advantage of jazz’s rapidly exploding commercial appeal during the early 1920s and staged lucrative benefit concerts featuring jazz music as a way to generate financial resources that could fund their respective political activities. During the 1930s the NAACP sought to capitalize on the elevated social perception of jazz music and transform jazz musicians into celebrated emblems of New Negro advancement. The politically repressive McCarthyist climate of early Cold War America significantly transformed activists’ approaches toward the political mobilization of jazz. As jazz musicians consciously tried to distance themselves from the

communist and the allegedly communist organizations they once openly supported, activists' ability to mobilize jazz music narrowed during the early 1950s. At the same time, Cold War America created the opportunity for a new wave of grass-roots activists, which included jazz musicians, to come to the forefront of black political activism and begin to mobilize jazz music in new and imaginative ways. Jazz music became a way to inspire activists' participation in non-violent, direct action protests. Civil Rights activists mobilized jazz to broaden the scope and scale of the movement by circulating politically outspoken jazz albums within the marketplace for recorded music. Those politically conscious albums spread the reach of the movement by transforming spaces traditionally reserved for entertainment and leisure into forums for discussions of the philosophies and goals driving Civil Rights era black political activism. Jazz and the music's artistic performance philosophy additionally provided activists with a means of critiquing American democracy, especially during the critical 1963/1964 United States Presidential Election.

The evolving political mobilization of jazz music between the mid-1920s and mid-1960s, as evidenced within the sequence of historical examples detailed in this study, offers a new vantage point in the examination of African American political history. Specifically, by examining shifting trends within the political mobilization of jazz this study introduces a new opportunity to explore the themes of "continuity" and "rupture" within the context of the Long Civil Rights Movement thesis. While recognizing the long movement thesis' ability to seamlessly join different moments within African-American political history through activists' similar ideological focus, this study reasserts the transformative influences that the Cold War's emergence had upon the strategic and

tactical direction of African American collective political activism. An entirely new and unique set of political behaviors appeared during the Cold War era in regard to the political mobilization of jazz, behaviors that allowed activists to successfully maneuver Cold War America's repressive climate. Finally, "Mobilizing Jazz Communities" illuminates the effects that overt political expression within jazz music had on its audiences, and the ramifications it had within the social discourses defining the music's meaning.

## **Acknowledgements**

Completing this dissertation and earning a doctorate degree are more than just professional achievements; they both mark the accomplishment of a major life goal. Getting to the figurative finish line, from the kindling of my desire to earn a doctorate to the completion of my program of study, has consumed nearly a decade of my life. The journey to this point has been long, challenging, emotionally volatile and has taken an impressive degree of endurance. While the path here has not always been easy I would, without question, take it again. I would take it again not for the end reward but for the knowledge about the past, the knowledge about myself, and the many mentors, role models and friendships that I gained along the way. One of the many things that I learned as a student at Morehouse College was that accomplishments are not the result of individual actions but are the products of collective effort. I am much indebted to the community of people who have mapped and cleared my path towards this degree and who have pulled and pushed me forward. Whatever successes there are in this project are ours to share.

I am grateful to Morehouse College and Professors Delores Stevens and Melvin Rahming for giving me both encouragement and confidence as a scholar. Your classes and extra-curricular commitment to my intellectual development gave me the foundation necessary to pursue graduate study. I am equally indebted to The Ohio State University's Department of African American and African Studies and its amazing and supportive faculty. The topic of this dissertation was developed in James Upton's fantastic course on social movement theory. Professor Upton's insights have shaped my approach to navigating the theory in the pages that follow. I am likewise appreciative of the time and

energy that professors Ted McDaniel and William Nelson dedicated to helping be expand my understanding of jazz studies and African American political history, the two other primary bodies of literature this study engages.

I will be forever grateful to the Department of History at the University of Illinois for granting me the privilege of pursuing a PhD. In 2004 I applied to the program with an expressed interest in exploring the relationship between music and African American politics. The topic and I were warmly welcomed into the department and I found a great deal of encouragement from the faculty and staff. I truly enjoyed participating in seminars with Jessica Millward, Diane Koenker, Craig Koslofsky, and Dave Roediger. I am especially appreciative of Megan McLaughlin and Fred Hoxie's co-taught first year research seminar. They taught me the mechanics of writing a graduate level research article and generously allowed me to use their course to compose a very early draft of the fourth chapter. I would also like to especially thank Clarence Lang for his insights, advice, support, and encouragement. His engaging seminar on post-WWII African American political history was instrumental in shaping my understanding of the liberation struggle and gave me the initial opportunity to work through the historiography on the relationship between jazz and the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Elaine Sampson who administratively managed the graduate program during my tenure. Her assistance, knowledge, supportiveness and commitment to the department's graduate students have made navigating the administrative side of graduate study stress free. I would also like to thank my fellow colleagues in the department of history, especially Kwame Holmes, Ed Mills, Ashley Howard, and Ian Hartman. Your friendships have been one of the most

rewarding parts of this experience and I appreciate all of your shared insights and feedback on this project. Maurice Hobson, my colleague and graduate student mentor, deserves a special thanks, not only his support and friendship, but for also helping me to navigate through life as a graduate student.

The vast majority of this dissertation was written in Washington, DC. I have been extremely fortunate to find a network of colleagues and friends in Washington to make writing away from Urbana-Champaign a lot less lonely. I am very thankful for the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History's generous financial and resource support in the form a research fellowship. The museum's collections and archival holdings were invaluable in building my understanding of the relationship between jazz and black politics, and John Hasse, Ruben Jackson, and Ken Kimery's knowledge of the museum's holdings made wading through them an easy and rewarding task. I am especially appreciative of Pete Daniel's fellows' happy hour and the sense of community it cultivated. I would also like to thank my colleagues at Northern Virginia Community College, Alexandria, including Jimmie McClellan, Jim Baer, Joe Windham, Sue Jean Cho, Jean Braden, and Fred Olsen for providing me a Washington, DC intellectual home. Their support and encouragement carried me through the final year of the program.

None of this would have been possible without the encouragement, support, insight, feedback, wisdom, and work of my advisors and committee, Vernon Burton, Sundiata Cha-Jua, Jim Barrett, and Gabriel Solis. It was a privilege to have the opportunity to work with and learn from such an amazing and talented cadre of scholars. The best parts of the work that follows are a reflection of their commitment to graduate

education. My independent study with Professor Solis had a great influence on my understanding of jazz history and jazz historiography. Our conversations about jazz were one of the highlights of my stay in Urbana-Champaign. My time working with Jim Barrett had been an equally invaluable part of my graduate experience. I cannot thank you enough for your encouragement and enthusiasm, inside the classroom and out. I am very appreciative for your always-open office door and willingness to offer advice about graduate study and life in general. Your courses and feedback have played an important role in my academic growth. I could not have asked for better advisors than Vernon Burton and Sundiata Cha-Jua. You have both championed my progress through the department, going far above the call of duty. You both have been and will continue to be fantastic role models, and I look forward to continuing to learn from you. One of the many things that I enjoyed about working with each of you was the sense of community that you fostered among your students. Working with you allowed me to join a family of scholars, academic families that enjoyably blended with your personal families. Thank you so very much for all that you both have done and continue to do. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to Georgeanne Burton, who in many ways has been a fifth committee member and advisor. Thank you so much for your time and effort in helping me to continue to grow as a researcher, writer and presenter. Emerson once partially defined life success as having won the respect of intelligent people and the appreciation of honest critics. Working with Professors Cha-Jua, Burton, Barrett, and Solis have allowed me to capture what Emerson described. It is hard to express my gratitude to you all. Thank you!



I owe a special acknowledgement to Morehouse College Professor Keith Hollingsworth. In many ways Professor Hollingsworth has coached me over the course of my entire academic career, beginning with my first semester at Morehouse College. Thank you for cheering me along. You have been a great teacher, an amazing mentor, and I am grateful for your friendship. I would also like to especially thank Bradley Hardy, my academic wingman, who recently completed his doctorate in economics. I have been very fortunate to have your company along the entire path of my academic journey, from undergraduate study sessions at the Peachtree Street Starbucks to finalizing dissertations for deposit. You are an innovative ideas man and an incredible friend. I am looking forward to many more coffee shop work sessions and bike rides.

I would also like to thank my family for their love and encouragement over the course of my graduate studies. My parents, Caryn and Larry Gaffney, and my siblings, Brian, Marissa, and Kym, have always been a great source of support as I worked to accomplish this goal. Your cheers and belief in my ability to complete this endeavor pulled me through periods of writing fatigue. I am also grateful to LaVerta Holly, Charles Brown, the late Anna Marshall, and Fred Williams, my new family, for their support and their willingness to hand their daughter to a poor graduate student with ambition and good intentions. I have perhaps appreciated your encouragement most of all.

Finally, I would like to express my deep gratefulness to my very best friend, wife, and life partner Camille Gaffney. The most rewarding aspect of my academic journey was that it brought me to you. I am so very glad that my path towards a doctorate led me to Ohio State, where we met and have been inseparable since. Your laughter and brilliant smile have kept me grounded and focused throughout this experience. I share this degree

with you most of all. Your sacrifices created the space for this goal to be achieved. Your hard work paid for the electricity in my computer, the ink in my pen, and the photocopies at the archive. I cannot begin to express how much your sacrifices and willingness to share the stresses and burdens of graduate student life have meant. This would not have been possible without them. You are the joy of my life and I will forever remain in love with you.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1963 the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), known for its history of non-violent direct action protest tactics, from sit-ins to freedom rides, entered the music business. Under the leadership of national director James Farmer Jr. CORE launched a record label and produced its first album, *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* (CORE 100). James Farmer was an enthusiastic jazz fan but there were other motives driving the allocation of CORE funds to the production and distribution of a jazz record. Farmer believed that jazz, a music rooted in African American culture with an appeal cutting across, race, class, and gender boundaries, could be transformed into a valuable resource that could help support his organization's goal of creating a racially diverse and harmonious society.

The production and distribution of *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* was a collaborative effort. The Congress of Racial Equality owned no recording equipment or studio. The civil rights organization's executive leadership had no professional experience organizing and producing recording sessions. Neither had they any familiarity with the process of pricing, marketing, and distributing recorded music. Morris Levy, Chief Executive Officer of Roulette records, a leading independent jazz label, provided Farmer and CORE free access to the label's catalogue, allowing *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* to present the musical creativity of thirty-one of the world's leading and most commercially appealing jazz musicians. Industry giant Columbia Records designed the marketing strategy for CORE's record. The collaborative efforts of CORE, Roulette, and Columbia represented one of the many ways in which jazz music was mobilized to support the socio-political activism of the Black Liberation Struggle in the Cold War Era. For the price of five dollars jazz fans could purchase *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* and help financially sustain the

non-violent direct action tactics CORE used to erode segregation and racism. A memo written by Farmer printed on the inside cover of the album exposed eager listeners to the civil rights organization's philosophy and history.

Why did CORE select jazz music as a mechanism to raise funds and spread awareness of its philosophy of racial equality? How successful were their efforts? How was the use of jazz to support civil rights activism perceived by jazz fans, critics, and other musicians? More importantly, how did Farmer's use of jazz as a political resource tactically differ from earlier political uses of jazz by activists participating in the Black Liberation Struggle? What did these tactical shifts in jazz music's political usage suggest about broader changes in the liberation struggle's strategic, philosophical, and ideological focus? Above all else, what does the political work that *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* performed on behalf of CORE suggest about the role culture and cultural production play within social movements?

*A Jazz Salute to Freedom* is one of a long series of examples demonstrating the critical role that culture and cultural production—by way of jazz and the jazz community—played within the Black Liberation Struggle during the twentieth century. The term “Black Liberation Struggle” names the frame of reference that I use to conceptualize the history black peoples' collective socio-political activism within the United States. A variety of terms, including “Civil Rights Movement,” “African American Freedom Movement,” “African American Freedom Struggle,” “Black Freedom Struggle,” and “Black Liberation Movement,” among others, have been used in the past to name this history. The term “Black Liberation Struggle” best characterizes the twentieth century history of black collective socio-political activism. The term's

inclusion of the word “black” acknowledges the Pan-Africanist perspectives maintained by black American activists over the course of the 1900s. The term’s use of the word “liberation” reminds us that black American activists were not simply struggling for freedom but were struggling to be set free. Finally, I use the word “struggle”—as opposed to the word “movement”—to represent the idea that the twentieth century history of black collective socio-political activism did not represent one long socio-political movement, but was a composite of several rising and declining socio-political movement waves. Each of those waves was differentiated by their strategic and tactical actions, and by their philosophical interpretations of black American political ideologies. Two of those waves, the New Negro Movement wave and the Civil Rights Movement wave, are examined in this study.

Building on examples like *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* this study presents a historical examination of the role that cultural production played in developing and sustaining black collective socio-political activism between the mid-1920s and mid-1960s, and has a focus on the Black Liberation Struggle movement wave growing out of the Cold War era. Jazz music was mobilized as an invaluable political resource in a variety of ways by organizations and activists participating in the Black Liberation Struggle during this forty-year period. The music’s political value was tied to its commercial appeal. Organizations’ and activists’ approaches towards mobilizing jazz music evolved with each successive movement wave of the struggle. During the 1920s commercially successful jazz was first political mobilized as a means to help generate the financial revenue necessary to engage in social activism. By the mid-1960s, when the jazz community itself became an organizing center of liberation struggle activity, socio-

political activists' used jazz music's commercial appeal to spread and expand the reach and size of the struggle, forcing people to directly engage the struggle's philosophies and goals. I also account for how jazz music's growing stylistic diversity and changes in black cultural identity shaped how organizations and activists chose to politically mobilize the music in new ways.

In addition to documenting the significance roles that culture and cultural production have played within the Black Liberation Struggle, this study has two other primary objectives. First, by analyzing the strategic and tactical differences in the ways jazz was politically mobilized from one movement wave to the next, I offer new vantage point in the effort to examine how the Black Liberation Struggle has changed over the course of the twentieth century. Second, by highlighting jazz musicians' somewhat autonomous participation within the struggle, I show how the competing ideologies of black political organizations and leaders were often blended in the minds of individuals with the freedom to operate outside the boundaries of formal socio-political organizations. Jazz musicians selectively picked and pulled ideas from across the spectrum of black political ideology as they mobilized their own music to interject their own unique vision of the struggle's goals into the black socio-political landscape.

My effort to illuminate how jazz music was transformed into an invaluable political resource and effectively mobilized by liberation struggle participants is informed by the perspectives of social movement theorists describing culture's significance in the development of sustained collective activism. Since the 1980s African American political historiography in general, and especially historical examinations of the Civil Rights Movement, have been shaped by the work of sociologists, and their efforts to

theoretically model how social movements are initiated and sustain collective political action. Doug McAdam's 1982 *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* and Aldon Morris' 1984 *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* are among the most influential of these movement theorists guiding historians' perspectives. Using the Civil Rights Movement as a case study McAdam's "Political Process Model" argued that the emergence of sustained collective action was contingent upon three key factors. First, for a social movement to develop there had to be favorable "changes in the structures of political opportunities," meaning that the political power of those groups and structures targeted by potential social movements had become weakened. Second, potential movement participants had to recognize favorable changes in the structure of political opportunities and their ability to instigate social change through exploiting those changes, a process McAdam defined as "cognitive liberation." Finally, cognitively liberated individuals needed to be able to mobilize pre-existing social structures into centers of socio-political action. McAdam argued that in order for a pre-existing social structure to become an effective center of social movement activity it had to have a membership base, leadership structure, and communication network. For McAdam, the interplay between three factors indicated that social movements were continual processes from their inception to their collapse.<sup>1</sup>

Morris' "Indigenous Model," likewise drawing on the Civil Rights Movement as an empirical example, posited that social movements develop and expand around the emergence of "movement centers." Unlike McAdam's Political Process Model, which suggested that social movements could only be initiated in an environment where the

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<sup>1</sup> Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 36-50.



power of those opposed to the movement's goals was eroded, Morris' Indigenous Model suggested that potential movement participants had the power to initiate collective socio-political action on their own accord. Potential movement participants' ability to initiate a social movement, in Morris' perspective, was solely contingent upon the strength of the available "indigenous resource base," a resource base including charismatic leadership with strong organizational skills, and pre-existing social structures with membership ranks, communication networks, and access to labor and money. Once individuals began to collectively mobilize these resources to accomplish political objectives a movement center emerged.<sup>2</sup>

McAdam's and Morris' studies provided historians a place in time to begin their assessments of the Civil Rights Movement, and guided their attention toward key factors animating the movement in need of in depth historical analysis. Combined, their works helped create the framework for what historians now call the "Classical Phase of the Civil Rights Movement."<sup>3</sup> Ironically, as generations of historians invoking the insights of McAdam and Morris reified interpretations of the Civil Rights Movement into a "classical phase", theoretical understandings regarding how social movements developed and expanded were evolving. McAdam acknowledged that point in a new introduction to the second edition (1999) of his influential volume. Critiquing his earlier interpretation

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<sup>2</sup> Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 277-284.

<sup>3</sup> Major studies working within the context of the movement framework described by Morris and McAdam include *The Civil Rights Movement in America*, Ed. Charles Eagles (Jackson, University of Mississippi Press, 1986); Steven Lawson and Charles Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 2006); Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1982* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1984); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Jack Bloom, *Race, Class and the Civil Rights Movement: The Changing Political Economy of Southern Racism* (Bloomington, University of Indiana Press, 1987); for discussion of the 1955-1968 period as "Classical Phase" see Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, "The 'Long Movement' As Vampire: The Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies," *The Journal of African American History* 92, no. 2 (Spring 2007), 265-288; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005), 1233-1263.

based on more recent developments within the field of social movement theory, McAdam suggested that scholars should begin to use a more dynamic approach to studying collective action, and the Civil Rights Movement in particular. He posited that studies of the Civil Rights Movement needed not only to identify changes in structures of political opportunity, but how those changes were interpreted by individuals and groups in ways that led them to choose to engage collectively in a political movement. McAdam defined this process of interpretation as “collective meaning making.” He likewise suggested that interpretations of the Civil Rights Movement needed to simultaneously account for the ways in which those opposed to goals of the civil rights activists interpreted the same changes in the window of political opportunity, leading them to collectively counter-mobilize against advocates of change. Finally, McAdam argued that Civil Rights Movement studies needed to address the ways in which both movement participants and counter-movement participants continually interpreted the collective actions of one another.

McAdam also suggested that scholars needed to take a more nuanced look within the structures that helped organize and manage the collective actions of like-minded individuals. He held that it was not enough to simply identify these organizing structures, as his 1982 version of the Political Process Model had done, but that researchers also needed to account for why the particular structures that were mobilized to coordinate collective action were chosen to do so. McAdam advocated a deeper analysis revealing how individuals were recruited into movement participation. Incorporating “culture” as an analytical variable within theoretical models of social movements, according to McAdam, would provide a great deal of insight into why and how particular structures

were mobilized to manage collective action, and how movements expanded the ranks of their participants. McAdam wrote that, “For extant organizations or networks to become sites of mobilization/recruitment, they must be *culturally* conceived as constructed as such by a significant subset of the group’s members.”<sup>4</sup> Advancing the study of Cold War era African-American collective socio-political activism, *Mobilizing Jazz Communities* takes up McAdam’s proscription by examining the role that culture, vis-à-vis jazz, played in developing and sustaining African-American social movements emerging during this period. This study will specifically document the role jazz music played in identifying and recruiting Black Liberation Struggle supporters and participants, and how jazz helped to transform pre-existing social structures into centers of political activism.

As a category of analysis, “culture” is a challenging variable to account for because of the term’s broad and ambiguous meaning. Movement theorist Stephen Hart acknowledged that the concept of culture has often taken on “fuzzy and non-specific definitions” in studies that have examined the relationship between culture and collective activism. In addition to employing vague definitions of culture, Hart posited that theorists focused too much on the cultural traditions created by social movements and too little on the ways in which social movements have been influenced by “routine culture,” a term identifying cultural traditions and cultural communities in existence prior to the emergence of a social movement. Hart offered that social movement theorists needed to “systemically examine the ways in which pre-existing cultural traditions are appropriated and transformed, and how the results of this process are influenced by the structures

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<sup>4</sup> McAdam, *Political Process and the Black Insurgency*, xiii.

found in these traditions, as well as by the commitments participants and leaders have to values and beliefs embedded in those structures.”<sup>5</sup>

*Mobilizing Jazz Communities* employs Hart’s recommendations regarding examining culture’s role within social movements in two key ways. First, this study uses a very specific definition of culture. Culture, for the purposes of this study, identifies artistic expressions of the creative imagination, which serve as artifacts shedding light on the broader sense of values, beliefs, traditions, and customs of the historical moments in which they were produced. As the title of this dissertation suggests, jazz, and the social community surrounding the music, form the basis of the case study approach this study takes towards analyzing African-American socio-political collective action. Limiting the analysis of culture’s role in social movements to jazz and its social community offers a tangible and concrete framework in which culture’s influences can be more easily identified, interpreted and compared. The materiality of recorded jazz music, for instance, offers a stable construction of culture as a concept and provides a relatively static empirical data set for exploring the influence of culture over the course of an otherwise dynamic period of African-American political history.

Second, *Mobilizing Jazz Communities* builds upon Hart’s theoretical perspective by examining the ways that jazz music and the jazz community—a routine cultural tradition—influenced collective action; in this case, New Negro and Civil Rights era African-American political activism. In doing so this study responds to five questions that Hart posed regarding pre-existing cultural traditions’ roles within collective action.

Hart suggested that studies examining the cultural aspects of social movements ask:

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen Hart, “The Cultural Dimension of Social Movements: A Theoretical Reassessment and Literature Review,” *Sociology of Religion*, 57, No. 1 Special Issue: Sociology of Culture and Sociology of Religion (Spring, 1996), 87-100, 88, 95.

1. What elements in the cultural environment, embedded in what pre-existing traditions, are drawn upon by social movements?
2. How the structures of those pre-existing codes condition their impact on and use by social movements?
3. What cultural craftwork is done by movement participants as pre-existing codes are selectively appropriated, interpreted, transformed, and applied?
4. How these cultural forms created within movements work for movements?
5. How these cultural forms ultimately affect public discourse and political events?<sup>6</sup>

In taking on Hart's recommendations *Mobilizing Jazz Communities* strives to make a contribution to the discussion of culture's important role in the understanding of how social movements operate by providing a new and rich empirical dataset for further theoretical consideration.

In many ways the jazz community at the beginning of the Cold War era was increasingly becoming one of several new pre-existing "organizing structures" that were called upon to help advance the goals of African-American political activists. My understanding of the "jazz community" as a concept is broadly conceived. For the purposes of this study the jazz community identifies the social community surrounding the aural artistic medium for which it was—and still is—named. The jazz community's membership included the many musicians and business people involved with the creation and commodification of the music, the critics and journalists who helped the public interpret the music's aesthetic merit, and the countless mass of listeners—socio-political activists included—for whom jazz was apart of their everyday social and cultural lives. My conception of the jazz community also encompasses the social discourses that took place between its members as they negotiated the music's meaning.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Hart, "The Cultural Dimension of Social Movements: A Theoretical Reassessment and Literature Review," 98.

<sup>7</sup> For more discussion on the social turn in jazz history see Sherri Tucker, "Historiography," *Grove Music Online* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006, accessed 30 August 2006);

In this case jazz did not initiate the collective activism of this period but it did a great deal in helping African-American collective socio-political activism to sustain and grow its momentum. The jazz community was pulled into the political sphere as movement participants and like-minded jazz musicians increasingly relied upon jazz music to help develop what movement theorist Ann Swidler called “strategies of action.” For Swidler “strategies of action” identified “a general way of organizing action that might allow one to reach several different life goals.” Swidler viewed culture as a “tool kit” that individuals and groups could draw from to help construct various strategies of action, and that in recognizing culture’s role in constructing these strategies, culture’s influence within social movements would become clear.<sup>8</sup> The conversations taking place within the jazz community became increasingly intense and fractious as some jazz community members mobilized the music to further the goals of the liberation struggle and forced the entire jazz community to come to terms with the growing presence of the struggle, its ideas, and demands in an otherwise apolitical socio-cultural space. The transformation of the jazz community into an organizing structure of the liberation struggle at the hands of a few drew both support and condemnation from the community’s other members. I document those discussions in the chapters that follow.

African-American socio-political activists began to pull jazz out of the “tool kit” during the mid-1920s. The beginning of jazz’s mobilization by African-American socio-political organizations and activists within the context of the, New Negro Movement

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<http://grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?section=jazz.591400>>; For a broadened understanding of the jazz community as a concept see John Gennari, *Blowin’ Hot and Cool* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2006), 4; Travis Jackson, “Jazz Performance as Ritual: The Blues Aesthetic and the African Diaspora,” *The African Diaspora: A Musical Perspective*, ed. Ingrid Monson (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000): 23-82.

<sup>8</sup>Ann Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies,” *American Sociological Review*, 51, No. 2 (April, 1986), 273-286, 277, 273.

wave, was closely tied to the music's rapidly exploding commercial appeal beginning in the mid-1920s. Against the backdrop of critical debates surrounding the racialized differences between "hot" and "sweet" jazz, and jazz's moral value, organizations including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), and subsidiary organizations of Communist Party USA (CPUSA) began to take advantage of jazz music's popularity within the marketplace for musical entertainment. They all mobilized jazz as a lucrative fundraising resource. As the mainstream social perception of jazz began to shift from morally corrupt to artistically meaningful during the 1930s African-American political organizations, most notably the NAACP, began to celebrate the music as an emblem of New Negro advancement. The beginning of World War II and African American socio-political leaders' support for the Double-V campaign, which encouraged African Americans to match their desire to dismantle Jim Crow with an equally committed sense of American war-time patriotism, paved the way for the United States government to join African-American political organizations and activists in mobilizing jazz music. African American jazz musicians willingly lent their craft to help the federal government boost troop morale and sell war bonds, all while an unfolding bebop revolution was changing the sound, look, feel, and meaning of jazz for a young generation of African-Americans searching for a new sense of identity.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Gilbert Jonas, *Freedom's Sword: The NAACP and the Struggle Against Racism in America, 1909-1969* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Cornelius L. Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Jonathan Bakan, "Jazz and the Popular Front: Swing Musicians and Left Wing Movements of the 1930s and 1940s," *Jazz Perspectives* 3, no. 1 (April 2009); Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1997).

The McCarthyist climate of early Cold War America significantly narrowed African-American activists' ability to mobilize jazz as a political resource. Where activists and organizations across the African-American political spectrum were able to tap into the music's political value before the war, the music's political mobilization was constricted to the spectrum's conservative end after the war. Musicians who once willingly assisted CPUSA and labor organizations before the war consciously tried to distance themselves from this more radical wing amidst its repression by the government. The United States intensified its political mobilization of jazz during this period. In 1956 the Department of State launched its Jazz Ambassador's Program and sent several prominent groups of African-American and racially integrated jazz bands overseas as a way to demonstrate to an international audience that America's race problem was not as bad as the Soviet Union made it seem. By the time the Jazz Ambassador Program began African-American political activists were adjusting to the realities of the Cold War. Non-violent direct action protest tactics came to the forefront in directing the strategic approach of African-American collective activism as waves of grassroots activists emerged to participate in the struggle for liberation within the context of the Civil Rights Movement wave of the liberation struggle. African-American activists' approach towards mobilizing jazz music evolved in tandem with the rise of the Civil Rights Movement. Activists on the front lines of mass civil rights struggles began to view jazz as a resource that could help sustain their courage and resolve to continually engage in protest. The birth of soul jazz/hard bop in the mid-1950s, and its conscious return to the blues fundamentals of black music traditions, gave grassroots activists a sense of collective African-American identity. Jazz musicians, record producers, and critics also



became grassroots political activists themselves during this period as they used overtly politically conscious jazz recordings to spread the reach of the movement, its philosophies, and goals. Jazz provided African American activists a means to critique American democracy, especially during the 1963/1964 contest for the Presidency of the United States.<sup>10</sup>

Figures 1-3 offer a visual demonstration of the chronological evolution of the historical narrative presented in this study. Figure 1 displays an overview of jazz music's stylistic evolution. Figure 2 depicts the political evolution of Black Liberation Struggle movement waves, and the windows of political opportunity that helped create them. Finally, figure 3 displays the ways in which jazz music was strategically mobilized alongside the liberation struggle organizations and movement centers mobilizing the music. All three tables are linked through their use of the same 1890-1965 timeline to highlight the overlap between the evolution of jazz, the struggle, and the relationship they shared. Figures 1-3 collectively suggest that moments of rupture within liberation struggle—shifts in the window of political opportunity—corresponded with moments of stylistic growth within jazz. As each new movement wave firmly established itself within cultural landscapes defined by musical creativity new patterns of jazz music's mobilization appeared.

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<sup>10</sup> David W. Stowe, "The Politics of Café Society," *The Journal of American History* 84, No. 4 (March 1998), 1384-1406; Barbara J. Beeching, "Paul Robeson and the Black Press: The 1950 Passport Controversy," *Journal of African American History* 87 (Summer 2002), 339-354; Mary L. Dudziak, "Josephine Baker, Racial Protest, and the Cold War," *Journal of American History* 81, No. 2 (September 1994); Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Calls Out to Jazz and Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); David H. Rosenthal, *Hard Bop: Jazz and Black Music, 1955-1965* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Eric Porter, *What is this Thing Called Jazz?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

Figure 1

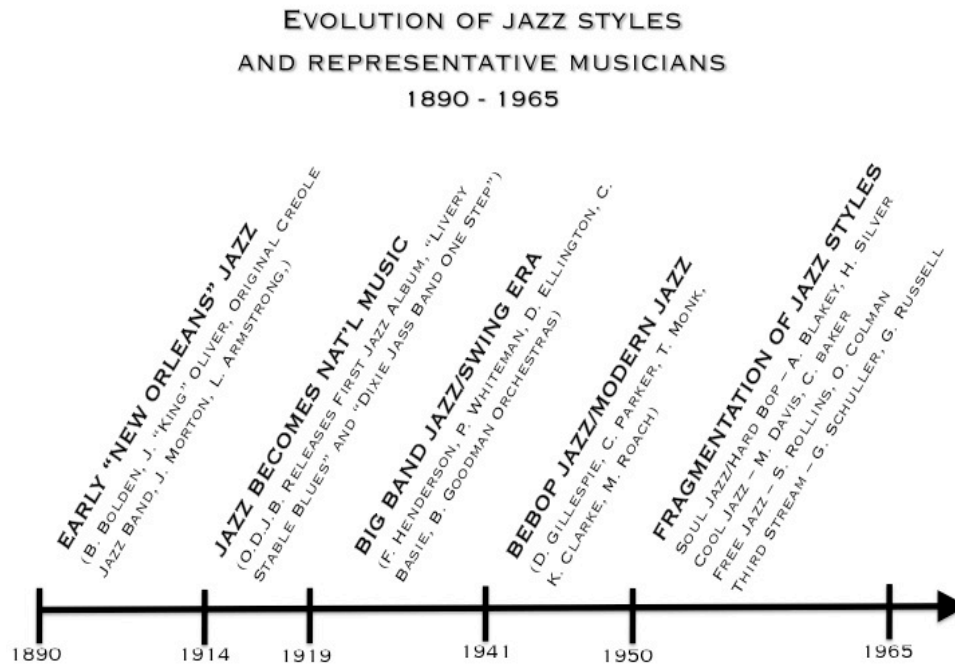


Figure 2

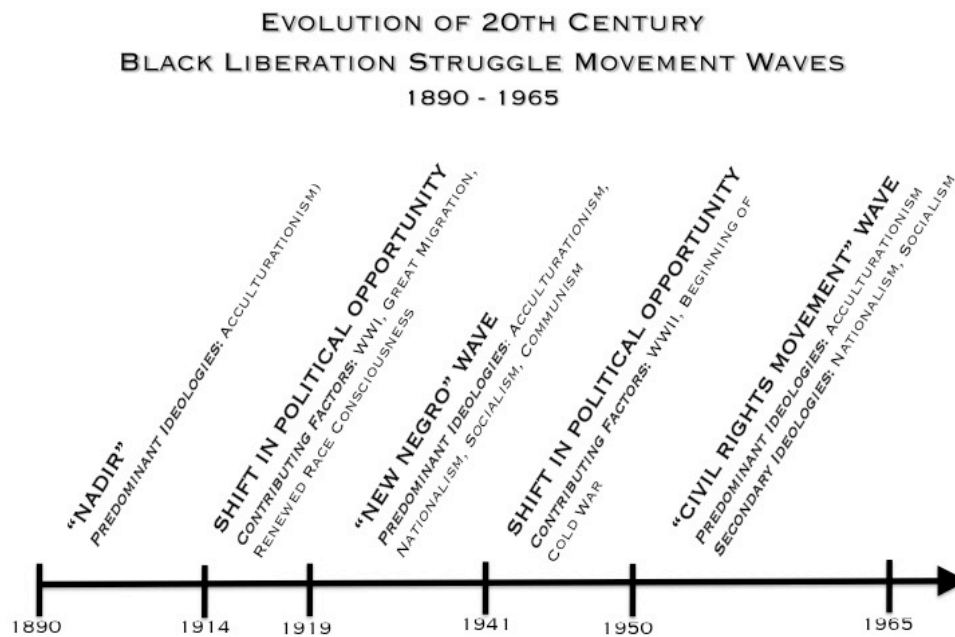
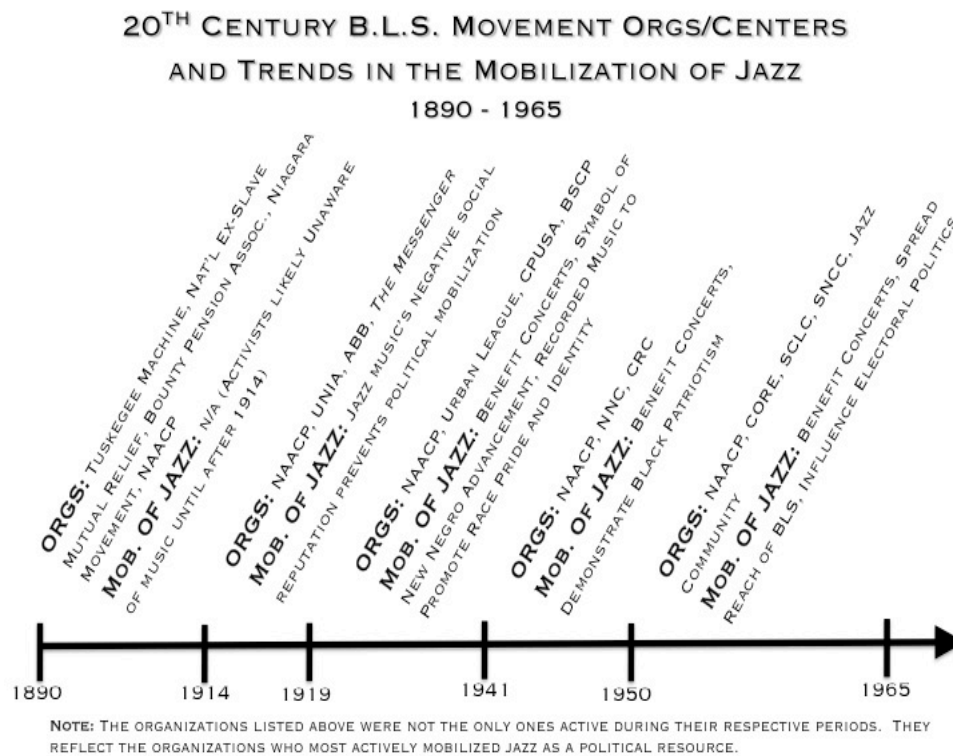


Figure 3



The changes in the ways jazz music was mobilized between the mid-1920s and mid-1960s dictate the structure of the historical narrative presented in this work. The goal of this organizational framework is to identify and investigate new trends in the way jazz music was strategically and tactically used in different moments within the Black Liberation Struggle. The ways in which liberation struggle participants continually imagined and re-imagined the potential political value of jazz reveals that the music became an increasingly important asset within the Black Liberation Struggle. Socio-political activists participating in each successive wave of the liberation struggle between the 1920s and 1960s incorporated jazz music into their strategies of action to a degree greater than the wave before.

*Mobilizing Jazz Communities* offers a new vantage point in the examination of African-American political history. Recent debates among scholars studying African American political history, especially the Civil Rights Movement and its periodization, have made finding new ways to examine African American's collective struggle for liberation necessary. A new generation of historians, studying both the Civil Rights and Black Power waves of the Black Liberation Struggle, has challenged the explanatory power of earlier interpretations of the post-WWII liberation struggle. The contested understanding of the Modern Civil Rights Movement suggested that the southern movement began when African Americans engaged in political activism initiated a strategic shift towards the use of non-violent direct action protest tactics to integrate consumer centered social institutions. The Montgomery Improvement Association's 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott and the 1960 Woolworth's student sit-ins in Greensboro are heralded as the shining examples of this tactical shift. This narrative held that the Civil Rights Movement evolved as formal movement organizations emerged from pre-existent and previously apolitical African American community institutions. These new civil rights organizations included the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), emerging from southern church congregations and historically black colleges and universities, respectively. These new organizations joined the more established NAACP and CORE to oversee non-violent direct action protest campaigns and realize goals by successfully mediating concessions and compromises between the government and grass roots. This perspective also argued that after 1965 the movement began a protracted period of decline, triggered by the ascendancy of Black Nationalist inflected ideologies, philosophies, strategies, and tactics

which eroded the consensus among Civil Rights organizations that had fueled the movement's expansion. According to this interpretation, while the introduction of Black Power initiated the Civil Rights Movement's decline, the 1968 assassination of the movement's de facto leader, Martin Luther King Jr., dramatically quickened its pace.<sup>11</sup>

This perspective has been challenged from a number of angles over the course of the last decade. Several debates emerged as Civil Rights and Black Power scholars worked to reinterpret our understanding of post-WWII African American political activism; especially concerning the periodization of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements and our conceptualization of the philosophical differences between the two. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Jeanine Theoharis, Komozi Woodard, and others have argued for a reperiodization of the Civil Rights Movement; suggesting that "The Long Civil Rights Movement" actually began some twenty years earlier in the context of the late 1930s Civil Rights Unionism Robert Korstad described.<sup>12</sup> They hold that the Long Civil Rights Movement was kindled in an environment shaped by the urbanization and northward migration of the African American population and the suburbanization of the formerly urban White American population. They posit that the sparks igniting the Civil Rights Movement were rooted in African American reactions to the successes and failures of

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<sup>11</sup> For literature on the "traditional" understanding of the origins of the 1955-1968 Civil Rights Movement and for theoretical interpretations of how the Civil Rights Movement operated see Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1984). For more discussion on the relationship between the grass roots and the state see Steven Lawson and Charles Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006). For discussion on the internal dynamics of movement organizations and the shift from Civil Rights to Black Power see Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>12</sup> Korstad used the term "Civic Unionism" to describe the ways in which African American unionists within the tobacco industry used unions as a vehicle to promote change in both the workplace and community at large. The concept links what were generally treated as separate spheres of protest, Robert Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2003), 2.

New Deal policy. They also argue that the Long Civil Rights Movement ended some twenty years later, during the late 1970s and early 1980s school desegregation battles in cities like Boston and Charlotte. These scholars suggest that the 1930s to 1980s periodization of the Long Civil Rights Movement is linked by a consistent ideological protest impulse against “racial capitalism” and economic oppression.<sup>13</sup>

Matthew Countryman’s Philadelphia-focused analysis of the Long Civil Rights Movement similarly suggested that the movement began with civil rights unionism and added efforts to elect black municipal officials during the late 1970s to the list of concluding Civil Rights struggles. Countryman departed with other scholars in his assessment of the unifying element of the new long movement periodization.

Countryman argued that the civil rights activism between the 1940s and 1980s was woven together through a consistent thread in the goals of activism; specifically, gaining inclusion in the New Deal’s protection of individual rights and access to the paths of upward mobility it promised. Countryman also used this framework to draw the Black Power Movement into the Long Civil Rights Movement positing that Black Power simply represented a strategic shift in the effort to achieve Long Civil Rights Movement goals.<sup>14</sup>

Timothy Tyson, Peniel Joseph, Lance Hill, Rod Bush, and others have similarly challenged the traditional narrative’s representation of the Black Power Movement.

Firmly rejecting the premise that Black Power’s rise marked the beginning of the Civil

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<sup>13</sup> Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005), 1233-1263. Dowd Hall uses the term “racial Capitalism” to identify the economic dimensions of racial oppression, specifically in the context the racialized labor market making black identity synonymous with cheap exploitable labor. Jeanne Theoharis, “Introduction,” *Freedom North*, ed. Jeanne Theoharis, Komozi Woodard, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 1-16

<sup>14</sup> Mathew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2006).

Rights Movement's decline, they argue that the "Long Black Power Movement" began earlier and lasted longer than the traditional narrative suggests. They suggested that the Long Black Power Movement's origins grew out of a deep tradition of black radical thought and action and materialized in the political militancy of the 1950s, exemplified by Robert F. Williams. They also posit that the Long Black Power Movement extended into the late 1970s as black electoral politics triggered a revival of black power activism. Alternative to some Long Civil Rights Movement scholars who argue that Black Power represented an evolved strategic effort to achieve civil rights goals Long Black Power Movement scholars argue that the Black Power Movement and the Civil Rights Movement were autonomous and concurrently operated in the same historical moment.<sup>15</sup>

Sundiata Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang challenged the reperiodization impulses of the Long Civil Rights and Long Black Power Movement theses. They argued that the backwards and forwards expansion of Civil Rights and Black Power activism removes what they call "The Black Liberation Movement" from "the historical process of change, development, demise, and regeneration."<sup>16</sup> They specifically suggest that both sets of long movement scholars minimize the significant effects Cold War repression had on post-WWII political activism, especially in regard to its ideology, goals, discourse, and symbols. Their alternative periodization schema describes the Civil Rights Movement

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<sup>15</sup> Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Peniel Joseph, "Introduction: Towards a Historiography of the Black Power Movement," *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed. Peniel Joseph (London: Routledge, 2006), 1-26; Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'Til The Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006); Lance Hill, *The Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Rod Bush, *We Are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and Class Struggle in the American Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

<sup>16</sup> Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, "The 'Long Movement' As Vampire: The Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies," *The Journal of African American History* 92, no. 2 (Spring 2007), 265-288, 269.

and Black Power Movement as successive waves of activism within a broader Black Liberation Movement. According to their interpretation each wave differed significantly in terms of its ideologies, discourses, strategies, tactics, and practices.

The historical examples of jazz music's political usage presented in this study, and more importantly the emergence of new trends in the political mobilization of the music, supports Cha-Jua and Lang's assertion that the politically oppressive climate of early Cold War America had a transformative effect on what I call the Black Liberation Struggle, and leads us to reconsider whether or not the periodization schema of the long movement paradigm is the most useful way to understand the twentieth century history of collective African American political activism. I argue that the emergence of new trends in the mobilization of jazz mirrors critical points of rupture and reinvention in African American political history. Those moments of rupture and reinvention in approaches towards the political mobilization of jazz were clear during the early Cold War era. Not only did the music's strategic and tactical role within the liberation struggle change as organizations and activists reacted to the Cold War climate, more dramatically the jazz community itself emerged as an organizing structure of the liberation struggle during the Cold War era. McAdam suggested that, "...the defining quality of movements...is the mobilization of previously unorganized or non-political challengers."<sup>17</sup> The jazz community's emergence as an organizing center in-itself suggests that a new movement wave arose during the Cold War moment. I suggest that in trying to reach an understanding of the Black Liberation Struggle as a historical process we should focus our attention on changes in strategies and tactics and not solely on changes in ideologies.

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<sup>17</sup> McAdam, xxv.



Changes in strategies of action determine a movement's ability to gain rewards and achieve goals; changes in ideologies do not.

By examining changes in the political mobilization of jazz music shifts within the philosophies, strategies, and tactics of the broader history of African American's collective struggle are better illuminated. Looking at the history of African-American collective activism from the prism of jazz's political mobilization is productive in this capacity because, unlike other African-American cultural resources, jazz was continually mobilized in a climate of shifting philosophical and strategic variables. Jazz offers a constant point of reference in the effort to understand change over time, and makes for an exemplary case study.

Historian Simon Wendt has demonstrated the utility of examining the periodization of African American political activism from the fixed position of a constant reference. As opposed to jazz music Wendt's analysis of rupture and continuity revolved around the sustained presence of firearms within collective social activism. Wendt successfully identified significant shifts in movement ideologies, philosophies, and goals between 1963 and 1966 by describing radical changes in the tactical use of firearms between organizations like the Deacons for Defense and Justice and the Oakland-based Black Panther Party. Where the Deacon's tactical use of firearms served to supplement a movement strategy rooted in non-violent direct action, the symbolic display of firearms—in addition to their actual use—became a political strategy for the Black Nationalist Panthers. Wendt's analysis of the evolving use of firearms suggested that African American political activism shifted from one phase to another as new philosophies, goals, and strategies directed the tactical use of resources. This study's

examination of jazz music's use within evolving strategies of action builds upon Wendt's approach.<sup>18</sup>

Music likewise offers an excellent opportunity to highlight related shifts in political strategies, goals, philosophies, and ideologies. Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison suggested, "...in social movements, musical and other kinds of cultural traditions are made and remade, and after the movements fade away as political forces, the music remains as a memory..."<sup>19</sup> Not only do musical traditions connect with social movements but they outlive the movements and preserve snapshots of them. Musical traditions and the lasting cultural products they produce offer historians a primary source base with a high degree of integrity regarding what they reveal about the movements that shaped them.

I do not argue that jazz music held greater sway within the Black Liberation Struggle than other genres of African American music. Spirituals, European concert music, jazz, gospel, and rhythm & blues each played important and different roles within the twentieth century waves of the struggle. Rewriting gospel hymn lyrics to fit local protest circumstances, for example, was a productive method for building collective solidarity among church congregations turned civil rights activist during the 1950s and 1960s. Aldon Morris, studying church based boycotts and college student sit-ins, recognized the way in which church music helped to create and sustain a unified consciousness among liberation struggle participants who were recruited into the movement via their membership in southern church congregations. For Morris, the act of

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<sup>18</sup> Simon Wendt, "The Roots of Black Power?: Armed Resistance and the Radicalization of the Civil Rights Movement," *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed. Peniel Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), 145-166.

<sup>19</sup> Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.

collectively singing familiar church hymns, with lyrics altered to invoke localized socio-political concerns, was a way for direct action activist to build collective protest consciousness and solidarity.<sup>20</sup> Rhythm and blues musicians played important roles in supporting direct action activism by performing at and joining in many of the early civil rights marches. Brian Ward highlighted the importance rhythm & blues had within the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements. Using evidence found in billboard charts, music reviews, and discography guides to measure the stylistic changes in rhythm & blues, Ward used the narrative of musical evolution as entry point to discuss the changing consciousness of black America in the context of the liberation struggle.<sup>21</sup> In fact, there was a significant amount of overlap between the genres during the Civil Rights Movement wave as all African American music generally gravitated towards their folk roots during the 1950s and 1960s, evidenced in jazz compositions like Horace Silver's "The Preacher" (1955), Charles Mingus' "Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting" (1959), and Jimmy Smith's 1958 album, *The Sermon*.

The integrationist, socialist, and nationalist ideological distinctions that were once believed to uniquely differentiate the positions of socio-political organizations, leaders, and movements have also become contested topics of historical debate, especially within the context of the post-WWII period. Several scholars have produced interpretations collapsing these distinctions. Evelyn Brooks Higgenbotham has suggested that new studies on African American political activism reveal an interaction between philosophical characteristics formerly associated with integrationist and Black Nationalist

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<sup>20</sup> Morris, 47-48.

<sup>21</sup> Brian Ward, *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

thought.<sup>22</sup> Similarly Jeanne Theoharis posited that from the perspective of activists “...there was not a tremendous gap between civil rights and black power – in fact, it was often the same work as black activists (and their white allies) moved between those ideologies.”<sup>23</sup> Other scholars like Mathew Countryman have advocated that civil rights and black power strategies identified critical philosophical and ideological differences in approaches to political struggle. Long Black Power Movement scholars have generally worked to harden the philosophical difference between the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements. Identifying these distinctions are critical pre-requisites to their claims that an autonomous 1950s Black Power Movement co-existed with the Civil Rights Movement.

The unique ways in which jazz musicians politically mobilized their music in an effort to articulate their vision of the liberation struggle and its goals to the larger jazz community demonstrated that ideological grey spaces developed within the Black Liberation Struggle, especially during the Cold War era. Free from the constraints stemming from working within formal socio-political organizations jazzmen and women were able to forge ideological perspectives that selectively drew ideas from a variety of distinct black political ideologies. The examples of jazz’s political mobilization that I analyze highlight the construction of hybrid political ideologies that jazz musicians created by blending different aspects of socialist, integrationist, and nationalist thought. The presence of these hybrid ideologies reminds us that while different ideological positions may have been firmly entrenched among leaders of formal socio-political organizations, the boundaries separating these ideological positions were much more

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<sup>22</sup> Higgenbotham, “Forward,” *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980*, ed. Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), viii-xiv.

<sup>23</sup> Theoharis, “Introduction,” *Freedom North*, 11.

fluid in the minds of the black public at large.<sup>24</sup> Finally, this study contributes to the effort to expand our understanding of the scope of post-WWII African American political activism. Where recent literature has focused on broadening the post-WWII black liberation struggle geographically I widen its scale by exhibiting the ways jazz musicians directly and independently engaged in political activism with goals shared by the traditionally identified cadre of leaders and organizations.

This dissertation is not the first study to focus on the relationship between jazz music and post-WWII African American political activism. Lloyd Miller and James Skipper, Jr. were among the first scholars to address the connection between jazz and social protest. Their 1968 article “The Sounds of Black Protest in Avant-Garde Jazz” argued that the expression of social protest in avant-garde jazz musically represented the black musician’s alienation from mainstream society and culture. Guided by the assumptions of classical social movement theory, specifically that social protest resulted from an individual’s psychological dysfunction, they characterized the black musician as a “deviant.” They suggested, “[avant-garde] is an expression of the view from the ghetto, urban tension, alienation, and anomic response.” Frank Kofsky’s *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music* (1970) challenged their contention, alternatively concluding that the emergence of avant-garde jazz, and its Black Nationalistic overtones, resulted from black musicians’ collective attempts to gain greater access to economic opportunity within the jazz world while undercutting racial discrimination in pay scales and hiring practices. Kofsky’s discussion of jazz’s connection to African American politics, in an environment characterized by political and economic conflict, provided the ideological

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<sup>24</sup> For an overview of the dominant twentieth century black political ideologies and their historical roots see Michael Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 1-22.

foundation upon which the historiography of jazz's relationship to political activism developed.<sup>25</sup>

Framed by Kofsky's narrow focus on free jazz and its connection to black activism, a second generation of scholars relied on a methodology based on discography and other biographical sources to describe the influence political activism had on creative output. For these scholars jazz music and political activism were parallel phenomena. John D. Baskerville argued that the changing structure of jazz performance created a utopian freedom of expression mirroring the desire for social, political and economic freedom of those engaged in Black Power activism. Charles Hersch alternatively posited that free jazz's performance structure reflected Civil Rights ideology, specifically Martin Luther King Jr.'s "redemptive community" concept where diversity and freedom of expression had premium social value.<sup>26</sup> Robert K. McMichael concluded that free jazz and its "integrationist sub-culture" represented a Civil Rights microcosm in which race relations were remade. Examining free jazz produced between 1960 and 1965 he offered that the launch of an "avant-garde" movement with a substantial white following, and the circulation of Black Nationalist jazz writing "...combined to politicize blackness for white listeners of [free] jazz who were marginally attentive to social changes of the movement." Scott Saul expanded the discussion beyond the narrow focus on free jazz arguing that hard bop jazz was "...a musical facet of the freedom movement – an

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<sup>25</sup> Lloyd Miller and James Skipper, Jr., "Sounds of Black Protest in Avant-Garde Jazz," *Sounds of Social Change*, ed. R. Serge Denison, Richard Peterson (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972), 27; For a full description of the social movement theory's classical model see Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1982), Ch. 1; Frank Kofsky, *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

<sup>26</sup> John Baskerville. "Free Jazz: A Reflection in Black Power Ideology." *Journal of Black Studies*. Vol. 24, No. 4 (Jun., 1994) 488 – 497; Charles Hersch, "Let Freedom Ring!: Free Jazz and African American Politics," *Cultural Critique*, No. 32 (Winter 1995/1996), 97 – 123.

extension particularly of the idea of direct action into the realm of structurally improvised music.” In one example, he offered that John Coltrane’s *A Love Supreme* (1965) powerfully affected politically unengaged listeners by awakening their political consciousnesses and drawing them into active participation in the Black Power Movement.<sup>27</sup>

Recent scholarship has began to reverse the trend of discussing activism’s influence on the music and are focusing on the inverse; jazz’s influence on political protest. In doing so they have also overcome past methodological problems by focusing on overt examples of jazz’s interaction with African American politics. Ruth Feldstein interrogated the political expression in Nina Simone’s “Mississippi Goddam.” Eric Porter studied the development of Abbey Lincoln’s social consciousness, climaxing with the production of her album *Strait Ahead*, and the discourse on race within jazz that arose from the album’s negative review. Steven Isoardi identified the ways in which Horace Tapscott and the Pan Africa Peoples Arkestra worked to recreate a notion of community in a post-1965 revolt Los Angeles. Benjamin Looker analyzed St. Louis’ Black Arts Group and the organization’s community development efforts and desire to create greater economic opportunities for black artists in the context of the Black Power Movement.<sup>28</sup>

These scholars have provided valuable insight into the ways civil rights and black power philosophies resonated with jazz musicians as they worked to practice those ideas using their music. Several important questions remain, however, if we are to understand

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<sup>27</sup> Robert K. McMichael, “We Insist-Freedom Now!: Black Moral Authority, Jazz, and the Changeable Shape of Whiteness,” *American Music* 16, No. 4 (Winter 1998), 375-416, 378; Scott Saul, *Freedom Is, Freedom Ain’t: Jazz and the Making of the Sixties* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> Eric Porter, *What is this Thing Called Jazz* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 2002); Ruth Feldstein, “I Don’t Trust You Anymore: Nina Simone, Culture, and Black Activism in the 1960s,” *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005), 1349-1379; Steven Isoardi, *Dark Tree: Jazz and the Community Arts in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 2006); Benjamin Looker, *BAG: Point from Which Creation Begins: The Black Artists’ Group of St. Louis* (St. Louis: University of Missouri Press, 2004).

the full dimension of the political work jazz performed within the liberation struggle. For instance, what did new Black Power activists hear when listening to Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*? How did listeners interpret Simone's political expression and Lincoln's social consciousness? What effect did the performances of the Pan African People's Arkestra and the Black Arts Group have on the reformation of their audiences' cultural identities? How did the works of these musicians support the struggle?

This study builds upon the invaluable contributions of Ingrid Monson's recent *Freedom Sounds* (2007). Focusing on the Civil Rights Movement's influence on the aesthetic choices of black musicians and the political economy of jazz production and consumption, her study has drawn our attention to the fact that efforts to desegregate the American Federation of Musicians and television network orchestras were important civil rights battle fronts. Examining and documenting the many civil rights jazz fundraising concerts Monson argued that the "moral example" of the Civil Rights Movement pressured many musicians into participating. While the use of jazz music to generate funds for African American political organizations was not a new practice in the 1950s, as I demonstrate, jazz fundraising concerts according, to Monson, did take on new meaning. They provided northern audiences and musicians an opportunity to hear directly from activists engaged in the southern struggle while allowing them to feel as if they too were contributing to the movement.<sup>29</sup> *Mobilizing Jazz Communities* places jazz civil rights concerts and numerous other examples of jazz music's political mobilization in dialogue to examine what the changes in jazz's political use can tell us about the

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<sup>29</sup> Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Calls Out to Jazz and Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 58-9, 220.



dynamics of African American political thought and activism over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This study relies on overt examples of jazz music's use as a political resource by activists engaged in political struggle in order to best demonstrate the important role that culture has played in helping to develop and sustain the Black Liberation Struggle.

African American and mainstream newspapers, the magazines and journals of African American socio-political organizations, archival records, autobiographies and interviews, and jazz trade magazines have been instrumental in explaining why liberation struggle participants consciously chose to incorporate jazz music into the strategies of action detailed in this study. My approach towards assessing the value of the political work the music performed varies with the specific ways in which the music was mobilized. With examples of jazz fundraising concerts, for instance, the music's value as a resource is measured in part by the size of the audiences and the size of the box office returns. In assessing the contributions of politically vocal jazz recordings, alternatively, I explore their ability to force potential consumers to engage the political messages the music carried into the marketplace for recorded music. Debates unfolding within the pages of jazz trade magazines have been instrumental in documenting those engagements.

Chapter one presents a pre-history of jazz music's mobilization as a liberation struggle resource prior to the music's first political use in the context of revenue generating benefit concerts for socio-political organizations during the mid-1920s. The chapter traces the birth and spread of New Orleans jazz beyond the borders of the Crescent City along side the evolution of the liberation struggle from the Nadir through the birth of the ideologically diverse New Negro Movement during World War I. I

suggest that socio-political activists during the Nadir did not turn to jazz as a political resource because they were likely unaware of the new music's existence. Jazz did not begin to blossom into a national music until the war. The Original Dixie Land Jazz band's 1917 recording of "Livery Stable Blues" and "Dixie Jass Band One Step," the first recorded jazz album, was a watershed moment in New Orleans music's growth into nationally known style.

The first wave of New Negro socio-political leaders was, however, well aware of jazz music. Despite the music's growing popularity they consciously chose to distance jazz from the struggle. While ideological conflicts divided the first wave of New Negro leaders, they showed a remarkably strong degree of consistency in their beliefs that jazz had nothing to offer the struggle for liberation. Examining discussions about black musical forms across the pages of magazines and newspapers published by New Negro organizations, I argue that jazz's negative social reputation, as a music inciting moral corruption in its listeners, proved too big a barrier, in the minds of New Negro leaders, for its productive use in the struggle.

Built around a case study examination of the political mobilization of Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington's jazz, chapter two illuminates the beginning of the long relationship that the liberation struggle and big band jazz shared over the duration of twentieth century black socio-political activism. Liberation struggle activists began to mobilize jazz music to support benefit concerts and dances during the mid-1920s. The music provided activists with a lucrative revenue-generating resource and created an opportunity for socio-political organizations to create displays of racial solidarity based upon the diversity of the audiences attending events. The old guard of New Negro

leaders was not responsible for bringing jazz into the liberation struggle. The initial efforts to mobilize the music stemmed from a newly organized NAACP women's auxiliary and the second generation of New Negro leaders, like Roy Wilkins, who came of age with jazz.

I also demonstrate how the political mobilization of jazz music during this period was rooted in deeper structural changes in liberation struggle organizations. Jazz became politically valuable in a climate in which organizations were redefining their goals, and the strategies and tactics they used to achieve them. Organizations and activists across the spectrum of black political ideology actively mobilized jazz during this period. Additionally, this chapter details how the changing social perception of jazz music, from an agent of moral corruption to a highly regarded musical art form, drove liberation struggle activists to celebrate jazz as a symbol of New Negro racial advancement. I finally describe jazz musicians' transformation into activists themselves as they used jazz to further the goals of the struggle on their own accord.

Chapter three traces critical changes in the political mobilization of jazz during the years between the end of World War II and the mid-1950s entrenchment of the Cold War. This chapter discusses the transformative effect that the Cold War had upon the Black Liberation Struggle and the political relationship between the struggle and jazz. I argue that the Cold War's domestic climate of political repression placed significant limitations upon liberation struggle organizations' ability to mobilize jazz music in pursuit of their goals. Organizations' access to jazz narrowed. Musicians, like Duke Ellington, who willingly made their music available to groups across the spectrum of black political ideology before World War II, consciously tried to distance themselves

from the more radical ends of that spectrum. Musicians' decisions to disassociate with the radical left were influenced by their observations of the backlash that politically outspoken musicians and artists experienced during this moment. The groups whose access to the music was not severed as a consequence of Cold War political repression significantly altered their approach towards mobilizing jazz. The music that had been used as a symbol of New Negro advancement was redeployed as evidence of black America's patriotism and enthusiasm for American democracy. Ironically, this change in approach paved the way for the federal government's cooptation of jazz, in the form of the Jazz Ambassador's program, which tried to conceal the racial oppression that the liberation struggle attempted to combat.

Chapter three also highlights how the reconfiguration of jazz music's relationship with the liberation struggle took place against a backdrop colored by the birth of Bebop. The years between the World War II and the entrenchment of the Cold War also witnessed the stylistic evolution of the music. Often characterized as a jazz style giving aural expression to a rising generations' disillusionment with American democracy, this chapter also describes the development of bebop—also known as modern jazz—and highlights how critics and listeners reacted to the new sound.

Continuing to chart the Cold War's transformative effects upon the liberation struggle and its relationship with jazz, chapter four examines the initiation of new trends in the political mobilization of the music. The new trends in jazz music's political usage documented in this chapter were directly tied to larger shifts within the liberation struggle; specifically, the early-1950s beginning of the liberation struggle's Civil Rights Movement wave. While the Cold War's domestic climate of political repression

shattered the New Negro Movement wave, it created the space for a new wave of liberation struggle activism to rise. The Civil Rights Movement wave was defined by its integrationist ideology, the ascendancy of new socio-political leaders, the rise of new centers of liberation struggle activism, including black church congregations, student groups, and decentralized New Negro era organizations, and the shift to new non-violent, direct action based strategies and tactics of activism.

The Civil Rights Movement wave was also defined by unique changes in the role jazz played in within the liberation struggle. Civil rights activists' new strategic approaches towards mobilizing jazz supported the new waves' philosophies and goals. Beginning with the 1957 struggle to integrate Little Rock, Arkansas' Central High School through the many civil rights demonstrations of the early 1960s, I show how activists engaged in non-violent direct action demonstrations turned to jazz as a way to help support their physical and mental ability to sustain protest. Activists' decisions to use jazz as a way to reinforce their mental wills to sustain protest were rooted in stylistic evolutions in the music, especially the rise of hard bop, which placed the black folk tradition at the center of its creative aesthetic. The most significant shift in the relationship between jazz and the struggle during this period was the rise of the jazz community as an organizing structure of civil rights activism. I reveal how jazz music quickly migrated from the periphery of the struggle to its center. Members of the jazz community became grassroots activists as they began to create, record, and distribute overtly politically conscious albums within the marketplace for recorded music. This new strategy of activism, which I have coined *Marketing Protest*, allowed jazz

community activists to extend the reach of the liberation struggle, and its philosophies and goals into social and cultural spaces it may not have reached otherwise.

In many ways chapter five extends the examination of the political work jazz performed as discussed in Chapter four. Chapter five examines Dizzy Gillespie and his 1963-1964 campaign for the Presidency of the United States of America. In the context of a Presidential election where civil rights legislation was a major election issue Gillespie used his jazz, through the guise of a political campaign, to keep the goals and ideas of the Civil Rights Movement at the forefront of American political discourse. This chapter details his campaign's ability to continue to spread the reach of the liberation struggle to politically unengaged social and cultural spaces. Gillespie and his jazz community supporters removed the marketing protest strategy from the market for recorded music and deployed in the arena of live performance. Chapter five chronicles that shift.

CHAPTER 1  
“‘A SPECIES OF MUSIC INVENTED BY DEMONS FOR THE TORMENT OF  
IMBICILES,’ A POLITICAL RESOURCE BECOMING, 1900-1925”<sup>30</sup>

Approximately thirty years elapsed between the birth of jazz music and the beginning of its mobilization as a political resource within the Black Liberation Struggle. This chapter’s primary objective is to explain why. Understanding the reasons behind the delay in jazz’s use by liberation struggle organizations and activists is especially important given how politically active black America was during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, black socio-political activists worked vigorously to improve the circumstances of African Americans whose lives were stymied by a powerfully entrenched *de jure* segregation in the south and a rising tide of *de facto* segregation in the north. The strategies and tactics that they used, and the ideologies that guided them, spanned the African American political spectrum. Conservative integrationists, liberal egalitarian acculturationists, nationalists, and socialists all advanced competing blueprints for liberating black America from racial oppression between the turn of the century and the Great Depression.

While debates between socio-political leaders working within these contrasting ideologies sometimes descended into slanderously sharp conflicts, they all shared at least one common thread; the absence of jazz music in the pool of political resources from which they drew to advance black America’s struggle for liberation. Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was a notable—with significant qualification—exception. Acculturationists and socialists did not add jazz music to their respective political resource pools until the late 1920s and early 1930s, when they all

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<sup>30</sup> “Jazz,” *Opportunity*, May 1925, 132-133

turned to jazz benefit concerts as a way to raise financial resources and create displays of interracial solidarity. The delay in jazz music's incorporation into the liberation struggle was a result of two interrelated factors. First, jazz music had to develop into a commercially viable product within the marketplace for music before it could be utilized within the struggle. It took time for seekers of musical entertainment to become aware of jazz music's existence as a marketplace option that could fulfill their entertainment needs. The American public's awareness of jazz—a new musical genre at the turn of the century—was not instantaneous at the moment of the style's conception. America's awareness of jazz grew slowly as the genre gradually spread beyond the boundaries of its New Orleans birthplace. Innovations in radio and recording technology during the late 1910s quickened that process. The urbanization of black America, spurred by the Great Migration, helped create large geographically concentrated black communities, which in turn created the conditions necessary for jazz music, as a commercial enterprise, to thrive. Urbanization brought listeners and dancers in contact with jazz musicians. By the late 1920s the availability of jazz in urban centers and urban audiences' interests in dancing and listening to jazz situated the music as a potential political resource with strong possibilities. Jazz could attract a large audience. Part of this chapter charts jazz music's maturity into a commercially appealing marketplace product.

The relatively negative initial views socio-political leaders held regarding jazz—once they had become aware of the music—also help explain the delay in the music's incorporation into the struggle. While past historians have criticized acculturationist organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for privileging European musical traditions over black



American folk music traditions during the post-WWI years the NAACP was certainly not alone. Nationalists and socialists shared the NAACP's belief that jazz lacked aesthetic merit and social value. They all felt that the new music was irrelevant to the struggle. The other part of this chapter comparatively documents liberation struggle participants' perspectives on jazz across the political spectrum. In doing so, I draw attention to contradictions between organizations' officially articulated perspectives on the music and the ways they actually mobilized jazz where these contradictions surface. The narrative that follows presents the history of jazz's transformation into an invaluable political resource and helps contextualize the moment when the music began to play a productive role within the struggle. An awareness of the pre-history of jazz music's mobilization as a political resource also helps to establish a baseline from which we can chart how jazz's role within the Black Liberation Struggle evolved through the struggle's successive waves of collective activism.

Most jazz historians agree that the musical genre that would eventually be named jazz developed sometime around the turn of the twentieth century in New Orleans. Jazz was a unique creation of the crescent city and its cultural and social dynamics. Jazz reflected New Orleans' rich cultural diversity. The new music was a hybrid genre that blended the musical traditions of the city's different racial and ethnic groups. The city's racial and ethnic diversity made certain that turn of the century New Orleans possessed an equally dynamic soundscape. New Orleans' French, Spanish, and Creole—white and colored—ethnic heritage ensured the continued presence and performance of European concert music. New Orleans boasted several prestigious opera houses. The city's black population, descended from both formerly enslaved and free blacks, contributed the blues

tradition, black sacred music, and the relatively new ragtime style to New Orleans' musical profile. The active presence of military bands in New Orleans since its Civil War occupation cultivated a brass band tradition among black Americans within the city; the Excesior and Onward brass bands were two of the most famous bands active during the turn of the century. String bands were equally popular options for musical entertainment, especially in performance settings that could not accommodate an entire brass band.<sup>31</sup>

In 1897 the New Orleans City Council's created Storyville, the city's infamous red-light district, in an effort to channel and confine the city's growing demand for vice. Popular perceptions of jazz history usually attribute the opening of Storyville, and the subsequent demand for musicians to provide entertainment for the districts' many brothels, saloons, and gambling houses, as the instigating factor producing the conditions in which jazz was created. More recent and carefully researched jazz histories have downplayed the importance of Storyville, however, citing the notion that only a few dozen musicians were supported by the district's economic activity. While Storyville should not be entirely downplayed as a variable in the birth of jazz—Louis Armstrong, arguably New Orleans' most famous jazz musician built his chops performing there as an under-aged adolescent—its role should be contextualized with the social activities of New Orleans at large. New Orleans vibrant social life created the opportunity for the city's musicians to begin to blend musical traditions. The social life of the city created a large demand for musicians. Music played important roles in providing entertainment for a variety of social functions including dances, parties, picnics, fish fries, parades and the

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<sup>31</sup> Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 35; Thomas Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 151.

many events hosted by social and fraternal organizations. The rising popularity of social dancing within the United States during the early 1900s, and in New Orleans especially, added significantly to the demand for musicians. Both social tastes and city planning produced a vibrant and lively music-centered entertainment economy and a ceaseless demand for talented musicians.

The social dance craze and the opening of Storyville fashioned an environment ripe for musical exploration and experimentation. Jazz historian Ted Gioia noted that “many musicians—mostly black, but also Creole and white—were experimenting with syncopation of ragtime and the blues tonality and applying those rhythmic and melodic devices to a wide range of compositions...what began as experimentation eventually led to formalized practice.”<sup>32</sup> Jazz, as a genre, gained coherence as the city’s new class of professional and semi-professional dance band and district musicians gathered together on stage and after working hours to interact and perform informally with one another. The new genre, however, actually pre-dated its name by at least a decade. Jazz was simply referred to as “New Orleans music.”<sup>33</sup>

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century jazz was beginning its gradual spread beyond the boundaries of the Crescent City. In 1907 Jelly Roll Morton, pianist and self-proclaimed originator of jazz, introduced the new music’s unique sound and style of playing to musicians and audiences in the neighboring state of Texas.<sup>34</sup> Another group of New Orleans musicians, who jazz historian Lawrence Gushee has identified as one of the first New Orleans jazz bands to tour outside the city, including

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<sup>32</sup> Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 22, 32-36.

<sup>33</sup> Howard Reich and William Gaines, *Jelly’s Blues: The Life, Music, and Redemption of Jelly Roll Morton* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2003), 12.

<sup>34</sup> Reich and Gaines, *Jelly’s Blues*, 33.

Bill Johnson (guitar/leader), William Tuncel (mandolin), Alphonse Ferzand (string bass), Charley Henderson (banjo), and John Collins (trumpet) organized a band around the same time and carried jazz as far east as Gulfport and Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Gushee cited Bill Johnson's band as the first known band to demonstrate to other communities that ragtime and blues music could be played in larger performance ensembles, including ones with brass instruments. Blues and ragtime were typically performed as solo acts during this time; the band's instrument configuration was new to areas outside of the Crescent City. Johnson organized another band in California toward the end of 1907 and acquainted audiences and musicians with New Orleans music as far north as Oakland.<sup>35</sup> Changing directions, Morton continued the spread of New Orleans music eastward. By 1910 he had taken the new genre to major urban centers including Memphis and Chicago, and by 1911 he brought the New Orleans music to Harlem. James P. Johnson, who became one of Harlem's most celebrated stride pianists, and a major influence on a young Duke Ellington, was captivated by Morton's first New York City performance.

In 1914 "New Orleans" music experienced an identity transformation in name. A San Francisco newspaper critic renamed the genre "jazz".<sup>36</sup> The new name seemed to catch on relatively quickly, although at first its spelling was inconsistent. When Bill Johnson reorganized and expanded his band in 1914, he fittingly renamed the band the "Original Creole Jazz Band" to keep pace with New Orleans music's new name. Johnson's band toured extensively and appeared in Chicago and New York City the following year. The national public's awareness of jazz significantly expanded in 1917. The first "jazz" record was recorded and distributed that year. Trumpet player Nick

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<sup>35</sup> Lawrence Gushee, *Pioneers of Jazz: The Story of the Creole Band* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 68, 71-75.

<sup>36</sup> Reich and Gaines, 34, 45.

LaRocca's New Orleans-based Original Dixieland Jazz Band (ODJB) recorded two songs, "Livery Stable Blues," and "Dixie Jass Band One Step" for the Victor Talking Machine Company. The record's release was a financial success and as a result jazz's popularity rapidly grew. The ODJB's album provided many Americans, black and white, their first exposure to jazz music.<sup>37</sup>

Also, by 1917 active jazz scenes were being developed in major urban centers across the country. The development of local jazz scenes, characterized by networks of live performance venues and radio broadcasts, were consequences of the Great Migration. The Great Migration described the massive redistribution of America's black population from the rural south to the urban north between 1900 and 1960. The Great Migration was the southern rural black populous' socio-political response to the racially oppressive conditions they experienced in the south through their denial of voting rights, Jim Crow segregation, the economic exploitation that accompanied sharecropping and tenant farming, and lynching. While racial oppression pushed African Americans out of the south, the lure of job opportunity and a greater degree of freedom pulled African Americans to the industrial north and west, especially after the beginning of World War I. Between 1890 and 1930 alone nearly two million African Americans abandoned southern states, often heading for the industrial centers, including Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Kansas City, Pittsburgh, Milwaukee and Cleveland, as well as Philadelphia, New York, and Boston.<sup>38</sup> Local jazz scenes in the urban north grew in tandem with urban black communities. Not only did the Great Migration create a geographically concentrated

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<sup>37</sup> Amiri Baraka (writing as LeRoi Jones) *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: Quill William Morrow, 1999), 100; Gioia, 37-39.

<sup>38</sup> For a more specific analysis of quantitative Great Migration trends see Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 78-80.

demand for musical entertainment among the new black residents of industrial cities, but it also ensured an abundant supply of musical entertainment. Jazz musicians followed their audiences. Local jazz scenes in cities like Chicago received a significant influx of musicians flowing out of the south, especially after the Navy Department closed New Orleans red-light district where jazz musicians had been employed. The demand of rapidly expanding audiences for musical entertainment, combined with the growing supply of jazz musicians, paved the way for the establishment of performance venues that would support the circulation of jazz music on the national level.<sup>39</sup>

When black socio-political leaders and organizations began crafting strategies and tactics aimed at confronting the rising tide of racial segregation in the American south, however, jazz had not yet emerged as a distinctive form of music. Jazz's absence within the liberation struggle during the first years of the 1900s was less a result of leaders' and organizations' lack of regard for the music, but was more a consequence of the notion that they likely did not know that jazz existed. When Booker T. Washington began his ascendancy into political power during the years surrounding his 1895 Atlanta exposition speech jazz music was still in the slow process of crystallizing as a genre. The black New Orleans musicians who would soon make jazz music famous, including Louis Armstrong (b. 1901) had yet to be born, and the musicians who were apart of the first generation of jazz musicians were only children. Freddie Keppard, whose cornet playing contributed to the evolutionary leap transforming ragtime into jazz, was only five years old when Washington's conservative integrationist agenda won the praise of the white southern press and the support of white northern philanthropists by urging southern

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<sup>39</sup> William Kenney, *Chicago Jazz*, 12; Kansas City's jazz scene likewise experience a boom as a result of the great migration, see Frank Driggs and Chuck Haddix, *Kansas City Jazz: From Ragtime to Bebop – A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

blacks to “caste your buckets down where you are” and forego the struggle for civil rights and social equality. While the “Wizard of Tuskegee,” as Washington was called, expanded the influence of his Tuskegee Institute Machine and his accommodationist philosophy of economic self-help “New Orleans Music” was just beginning to take shape.

Nor had the nation’s awareness of jazz grown in time to play a role within the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty, and Pension Association. Formally incorporated in 1898, the association organized formerly enslaved African Americans and petitioned the federal government to establish a pension program based on their years of uncompensated forced labor. The association’s local chapters throughout the southern United States operated on a communal self-help model and used their memberships’ combined monthly dues to provide individual members with burial and financial assistance. Described by historian Mary Frances Berry as a “poor peoples’ movement” the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty, and Pension Association was the largest black socio-political organization around the turn of the century and contained over 300,000 members during the first decade of the twentieth century. The association collapsed, however, as jazz music was making its debut within the American music market. The association’s organizational strength on the national level dissipated when Callie House, the association’s president, repressively targeted by multiple arms of the federal government, was arrested, convicted, and incarcerated for fraud.<sup>40</sup>

The 1903 publication of W.E.B. DuBois’ *Souls of Black Folks* and the “Talented Tenth” predated the earliest documented tours of the New Orleans musicians who took

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<sup>40</sup> Mary Frances Berry, *My Face is Black is True: Callie House and the Struggle for Ex-Slave Reparations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005)

jazz beyond New Orleans. DuBois' two works established the foundation of the acculturationist political ideology that evolved over the course of the first two decades of the twentieth century. In *The Souls of Black Folk* the Harvard trained historian and sociologist challenged the accommodationist nature of Washington's conservative integrationist perspectives. DuBois used "The Talented Tenth" to outline an alternative vision of liberation and a means to achieve it. In the *Souls of Black Folks* DuBois respectfully characterized Washington as a well-intentioned power broker as opposed a leader pressing a Black American agenda. DuBois suggested that Washington was the chief negotiator between the white South, the white North, and Africans Americans, ultimately working in the interest of greater economic prosperity of the entire nation. DuBois challenged Washington's assumption that the Negro could only survive through submission and that blacks should willingly forego political power, civil rights, and higher education; three elements of citizenship that DuBois held dear. DuBois, whose academic training taught him the value of constructive debate, was also critical of the Tuskegee Machine's ability, often exercised, to silence dissenting voices of other well-intentioned, well-thinking men.<sup>41</sup>

In the "Talented Tenth" DuBois detailed a viable alternative to Washington's industrial-focused accommodationism. DuBois argued that America's "race problem" would not be solved through the industrial training of the uneducated African American masses. The solution rested in the example and leadership of the intellectual vanguard of black America. "The Negro race, like all races," DuBois wrote, "is going to be saved by exceptional men." DuBois explained that the races of men advanced from the top down

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<sup>41</sup> William E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folks* reprinted in *Three Negro Classics* (New York: Avon Books, 1965), 207-390, 240-252.



and that the expansion of higher education to qualified men would trickle down and lift the uneducated masses. DuBois believed that the leading men of both races could forge a powerful spirit of cooperation based upon their shared social practices and cultural traditions. The black and white talented tenth would set the example for the masses of both races to follow.<sup>42</sup>

DuBois' talented-tenth philosophy divided the race into two classes, an elite vanguard of leaders and a mass of followers. Under DuBois' two-tiered schematic the social and cultural mores of the talented tenth were naturally privileged over those of the remaining ninetieth. According to DuBois, "In many respects it is right and proper to judge a people by its best classes rather than by its worse classes or middle rank. The highest class of any group represents its possibilities rather than its exceptions, as is so often assumed with the Negro."<sup>43</sup> The talented tenth's cultural values were geared towards acculturating into white upper class society, which was the first social stratum targeted for integration and bi-racial cooperation. DuBois was very familiar with the comparative social and cultural nuances of the different African American social classes. An 1897 research grant from the University of Pennsylvania provided DuBois the opportunity to investigate the social and cultural characteristics of black Philadelphia and how those characteristics varied in relation to four socio-economic strata he identified within the city's black community. The musical tastes of black Philadelphians varied between the identified social strata. The city's black elite favored European musical traditions and concentrated their social activities within the home and centered on intimate gatherings, receptions, and the activities of selective social clubs. While at the

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<sup>42</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, "The Talented Tenth," *Crossing the Danger Water: Three Hundred Years of African-American Writing*, ed. Deirdre Mullane (New York: Anchor Books, 1993), 382-392, 382.

<sup>43</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (Philadelphia: Schocken Books, 1899), 316.

time of DuBois' study Philadelphia's black upper crust would have likely been unfamiliar with jazz, they looked down upon black folk music including the blues and ragtime, two of jazz music's primary antecedents. Within black society the blues and ragtime were working class musics. If the cultural tastes of black Philadelphia's elite were anything like their New Orleans counterparts they likely would have held the new music in low regard. Jelly Roll Morton's virtuous middle class Creole family, for instance, disowned him as his musical creativity led him into the bawdy world of the blues.<sup>44</sup> Jazz later assumed the linkage to the black working class experience established by its black folk music predecessors, as well as the disdain of the black elite as awareness of the music spread during the 1910s.

DuBois' talented tenth blueprint for African American political activism gained structural footing in 1905. DuBois, William Monroe Trotter, F.L. McGee, Charles Bentley, John Hope, and other prominent African Americans organized a conference that year where black America's intellectual leadership assembled and mapped a strategy to provide African Americans greater access to higher education, quality health care, and full access to America's political franchise through the extension of voting rights. The conference's participants formally organized as the "Niagara Movement" and crafted an agenda that encouraged African American achievement in property ownership, artistic and literary creativity, and educational advancement. The Niagara Movement was relatively short lived. Its survival was contingent on sustained philanthropic financial support, often from the generosity of white patrons. Booker T. Washington, who viewed the new socio-political organization as a challenge to his monarchical control over black

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<sup>44</sup> Reich and Gaines, 13.

political life, used his influence to dam the flow of money into the movement. It effectively collapsed in 1909 due to its lack of resources.<sup>45</sup>

The Niagara Movement's civil rights philosophy did not vanish with the movement but found new life as white progressives' interest in racial inequality grew. The 1908 Springfield race riot, where Springfield's white citizens assaulted newly arriving black laborers and strikebreakers, drew progressives' attention to America's race problem. The following spring a small group of white progressives, led by William English Walling, convened a meeting of white and black intellectual leaders in New York City. The meeting's purpose was to discuss ways to positively transform race relations and promote social and political integration.<sup>46</sup> Walling's group welcomed the remaining members of the Niagara Movement, DuBois included, to the discussion. Forty people participated in the event. At the end of the conference the participants resolved to organize the National Negro Committee. The committee was charged with the task of developing a formal strategy to address America's race problem. After a year's adjournment the conference was reconvened and the committee returned to New York presented its findings to the larger group. Based on their conclusions the interracial collective of progressives created the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The newly minted civil rights organization was officially incorporated in New York State in 1911. While the NAACP was a multi-racial

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<sup>45</sup> Christopher E. Forth, "Booker T. Washington and the 1905 Niagara Movement Conference," *Journal of Negro History* 72, No. 3/4 (Summer-Autumn 1987), 45-56, 51.

<sup>46</sup> Gilbert Jonas, *Freedom's Sword: The NAACP and the Struggle Against Racism in America, 1909-1969* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 9.

organization its executive leadership was near exclusively white; DuBois, who served as Director of Publicity and Research, was the exception.<sup>47</sup>

The NAACP strengthened the legitimacy of DuBois' talented tenth philosophy; intellectual leaders of both races were now collectively working together. In many ways the NAACP simply imported the Niagara Movement's acculturationist philosophy and goals while contributing the resources necessary to accomplish them. The NAACP dedicated its energy towards extending civil rights and social equality to America's black citizens. The organization labored to prevent lynching and other forms of racial violence, secure equal access to quality education, extend voting rights to African Americans, and end segregation within public transportation. The NAACP executive leadership publicly declared that, "The only means we can employ are education, organization, agitation, and publicity – the force of an enlightened public opinion." The NAACP crafted a two-fold strategy to wage war on Jim Crow segregation. They pursued legal tactics focused on influencing court rulings and legislative policy against discriminatory practices and they relied on media outlets to disseminate positive information about African Americans. The organization's primary media outlet was their monthly journal *Crisis*. DuBois edited the journal as a part of his responsibilities as the director of publicity and research. *Crisis's* primary objective was to positively influence the public's view on race and the negative effects of racism. The journal employed well-researched factual data, well crafted editorials, and reported examples of African American achievement in this effort. In 1910, *Crisis's* first year of publication, the newsmagazine had an impressive circulation of nearly 12,000 copies. Within a year *Crisis* was being mailed to nearly

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<sup>47</sup> Jonas, *Freedom's Sword*, 15.

every state in the union and by the end of the decade its message reached 100,000 homes, libraries, and businesses monthly.<sup>48</sup>

As the American public's awareness of jazz was gradually beginning to grow the NAACP's strategies for shaping public opinion on race relations and black humanity began to mature. Cultural production increasingly became a preferred tactical approach in their strategic efforts. According to historians August Meier and John Bracey Jr., "From the point of view of NAACP strategy there was a widespread assumption that the work of black artists was an aspect of the struggle to advance the status of black Americans. The positive images flowing from their art were widely recognized as a cultural force capable of both undermining notions of white supremacy and encouraging self-esteem among Negroes."<sup>49</sup> Art and Letters, according to Nathan Huggins, were viewed by the NAACP as "...a bridge across the chasm between the races."<sup>50</sup> The organization believed that cultural production could provide an invaluable resource base to support their acculturationist goals. Culture was universally understood as the symbolic yardstick against which civilizations were measured. The fastest way to demonstrate that African Americans had something to offer the nation, and were deserving of active participation in it, was through cultural achievement and recognition. If acculturationists could use cultural production to demonstrate black America's value to a nation struggling to offer its own unique contribution to western culture, then Americans, both white and black, might also reassess African Americans' position in relation to the nations' social, political, and economic fabric.

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<sup>48</sup> Jonas, *Freedom's Sword*, 20.

<sup>49</sup> August Meier and John H. Bracey, Jr., "The NAACP as a Reform Movement, 1909-1965: 'To Reach the Consciousness of America,'" *Journal of Southern History* 59, no. 1 (February 1993): 3-30, 11-2.

<sup>50</sup> Nathan Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 5.

The NAACP's hiring of James Weldon Johnson in 1916 was a significant step in this direction. Before joining the NAACP Johnson, whose mother instilled in him a passion for English literature and European classical music, enjoyed the fruits of a successful and respectable career as a poet, novelist, and songwriter. In 1901 Johnson penned the lyrics of "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing." Appreciation for Johnson's songwriting abilities flourished as his lyrics were heard on Broadway stages. In 1912 Johnson published *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, his first novel. Johnson became the NAACP's first field secretary and was responsible for growing the African American membership of the organization.<sup>51</sup> Booker T. Washington's 1915 death created an opportunity for Johnson and the NAACP grow and expand its support base within black America. In the years following Washington's passing the organization had accumulated over 11,000 members and open over eighty local chapters. By the end of the decade the organization comprised of over 100,000 members and 400 local chapters.<sup>52</sup>

The NAACP was not the only socio-political organization trying to cultivate a constituency during the latter half of the 1910s. The years surrounding World War I marked an explosion of black socio-political activity within the United States. The black World War I experience was a major catalyst driving that explosion. The black war experience prompted a significant change in black consciousness and engendered a renewed sense of identity and socio-political purpose. Those black Americans coming to the forefront of socio-political leadership regarded themselves as "New Negroes." A

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<sup>51</sup> Gilbert Jonas, 20.

<sup>52</sup> Record Wilson, "Negro Intellectual Leadership in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People: 1910-1940," *Phylon* 17, No. 4, (4th Qtr., 1956), 375-389, 383.

product of the WWI moment, the New Negro symbolized a psychological revolution in black consciousness. In the words of Howard University Professor and cultural critic Alain Locke the mental transformation encapsulated “the rise from social disillusionment to race pride, from the sense of social debt to the responsibilities of social contribution.”<sup>53</sup> According to Locke the New Negro was characterized by a new awareness of self and self-worth. This new awareness of self, in Locke’s mind, inspired the Great Migration as African Americans looked northward for greater social and economic opportunity and the possibility of contributing to the larger development of the nation. Politically, the New Negro represented a clear break with the staled accommodationist philosophy of the Tuskegee Machine. The New Negro assumed an active role in creating solutions to America’s so-called “Negro problem.”<sup>54</sup> While New Negroes were bound by a common sense of purpose in their desire to remedy racial injustice and oppression within America, their respective approaches towards accomplishing this goal spanned the spectrum of black political ideology. Marcus Garvey’s nationalist UNIA, A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen’s socialist oriented *Messenger* magazine, and Cyril Briggs’ nationalist African Blood Brotherhood (ABB) joined the acculturationist NAACP and Urban League in the black socio-political landscape.<sup>55</sup>

The growth of the NAACP was eclipsed by the rise of Garvey’s UNIA within the United States during this WWI. The UNIA was organized around Garvey’s vision of a world in which Africa served as the epicenter of a black trans-national society, one linking people of African descent across the western world together through economic

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<sup>53</sup> Alain Locke, “The New Negro,” *The New Negro: an Interpretation* (New York: A.C. Boni, 1925), 11.

<sup>54</sup> Locke, *The New Negro*, 7, 9-10.

<sup>55</sup> Theodore Vincent characterized the nationalist and socialist black political activities as components of an ideologically diverse New Negro political impulse. See Theodore Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (Berkeley, CA: Ramparts Press, 1972), 38-47.

and cultural ties. Garvey's vision was rooted in a desire to cultivate black peoples' pride in their shared racial identity and history. The UNIA was the organizational framework Garvey used to implement his Pan-African Nationalist philosophy. Inspired by Booker T. Washington's message of economic self-help, Garvey established the UNIA in his native Jamaica in 1914. The association initially concentrated on improving black life within the Caribbean by providing blacks with access to industrial education in a fashion similar to Washington's Tuskegee Institute model. The UNIA's official goals centered on creating bonds of brotherhood among peoples of African descent, foster race pride, and bringing African societies into the modern world.<sup>56</sup>

The UNIA's role as a leading socio-political voice for blacks across the Diaspora grew significantly after Garvey imported the organization into the United States. Garvey initially came to America in 1916 on a fundraising tour designed to garner support for UNIA activities back in Jamaica. Garvey decided to remain in the United States, however, and worked to establish a new UNIA branch—and new UNIA headquarters—in Harlem, the cultural capital of black America. After overcoming some initial challenges in organizing the New York Division of the UNIA Garvey successfully incorporated the new branch in 1917 in the state of New York. The New York Branch contained approximately 1500 members at the time of its official incorporation. While historians have debated over the actual membership size of the UNIA at its peak in the early 1920s—membership estimates range between 60,000 and 6,000,000—most agree that the

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<sup>56</sup> Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement*, 16, 22; Edmund David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 172-174; Tony Martin, *Marcus Garvey, Hero: A First Biography* (Dover, MA: The Majority Press, 1983), 26-27, 31-32; Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1986), 34-37; Colin Grant, *Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 49, 54, 60.



organization expanded significantly between the 1917 establishment of the New York division and Garvey's 1925 imprisonment for mail fraud. By the early 1920s the UNIA had established divisions in many major black population centers within the United States including Chicago, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Detroit, and the District of Columbia, and had grown into the largest—in terms of membership—black socio-political organization within the United States.<sup>57</sup>

The UNIA's rapid growth was tied to the gravitational appeal that Garvey's message held for the black American working class. Garvey's relentless drive, his oratory charm, and his mesmerizing charisma are often cited as the UNIA's greatest asset in building a loyal membership base. Historian Edmond Cronon attributed the black working class' affinity for the Garvey movement to Garvey's ability to, "...put into words...what large numbers of his people were thinking."<sup>58</sup> Cronon also suggested that the 1918 establishment of the UNIA's weekly newspaper, *Negro World*, played a large role in growing the UNIA's working-class membership base. By the end of the newspaper's first year of publication its circulation had reached 100,000. At its peak the *Negro World* boasted an estimated circulation as high as 200,000 copies per week. At the highest end of the range, *Negro World's* circulation was twice as large as the NAACP's

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<sup>57</sup> Based on the record from Garvey's 1923 trial Cronon estimated the UNIA membership at approximately 60,000. Cronon's estimate is based in part on the federal government's argument that Garvey had defrauded between 30,000 and 40,000 UNIA members through the sale of Black Star Line stock. Cronon noted that the UNIA's influence was significantly larger than the size of its actual membership, see Cronon, *Black Moses*, 43, 206; Vincent estimated that approximately 1,000,000 individuals paid dues to the UNIA at some point in the organization's existence, with approximately 400,000 dues paying members at any given moment. Vincent also estimated that approximately 750,000 people were members of the UNIA during the 1920s alone. He also estimated that an additional 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 people actively participating in UNIA activities, Vincent, *Black Moses*, 13, 151; Colin Grant has recently affirmed Vincent's estimations in citing Garvey's own estimation of the UNIA's membership of 2,000,000 followers, Grant, *Negro with a Hat*, 164; Roderick Bush, *We Are Not What We Seem* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 95-96; Steven Hahn, *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2009), 134.

<sup>58</sup> Cronon, 171; Martin, 48-49.

*Crisis* during the same period.<sup>59</sup> One of the driving factors behind the growth of the UNIA was the organization's June 1919 incorporation of the Black Star Line shipping corporation. In September of that year Black Star Line purchased the *S.S. Yarmouth*, the first of the line's three-ship fleet. Black Star Line was financed through the issuance of common stock. Stock purchases were limited to individuals of African descent and had a maximum per person allocation of 200 shares. By early 1920 Black Star Line was capitalized at \$10 million dollars as a result of its stock sales.<sup>60</sup> Black Star Line was a fundamental component of the UNIA's work in developing racially autonomous institutions. Garvey believed that the economic institutions that the UNIA established would give blacks the power to assert their liberty and demand their human rights in a western world dominated by whites. The successful enterprises that the UNIA attempted to develop had the potential to demonstrate black peoples' sense of racial self-determination and self-reliance to the rest of the world. The impressive capitalization of Black Star Line demonstrated that the black masses shared Garvey's vision.

The cultural aspects of Garvey's nationalist enterprise also played an important role in growing the size and strength of the UNIA. Historian Ted Vincent suggested, "Though most UNIA officials were attracted to the movement for political reasons, the cultural side of Garveyism was probably of equal importance in drawing members." The organization manufactured a series of cultural symbols that its rank and file could use to cultivate a shared national identity. The UNIA's selection of red, black and green as the official colors of the race, its adoption of "Ethiopia, Thou Land of Our Fathers" as the race's anthem, and the declaration of August 31<sup>st</sup> as a black internationalist holiday

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<sup>59</sup> Grant, 138; Cronon, 45.

<sup>60</sup> Cronon, 50-56.

during its August 1920 convention were a critical part of this effort. Garvey's UNIA created the social opportunities necessary for nationalistic cultural bonds to be cemented between its members. The UNIA Liberty Halls across the United States were instrumental in this effort. The halls served as formal community centers for UNIA chapters providing them a gathering place for social activity and UNIA business alike. The first Liberty Hall was established in Harlem at 114 West 128<sup>th</sup> Street and more were established in major UNIA strongholds including Philadelphia, Pittsburg, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Detroit, Chicago, Miami, Norfolk, Newport News, Charleston, and New Orleans, the birthplace of jazz. Saturday nights at the Liberty Halls were reserved for concerts and dances.<sup>61</sup>

While Marcus Garvey's UNIA was reviving a nationalist political consciousness among the black masses within the United States A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen crafted an organized voice for black American socialism. Randolph had been an official member of the Socialist Party since 1911. In 1917 the union leadership of the Headwaiters and Sidewaiters Society of Greater New York asked Randolph and Owen if they would be willing to edit their union newspaper, the *Hotel Messenger*. In exchange for assuming the responsibility of editing the union paper the Society offered Randolph and Owen free use of office space for their activities with their Independent Political Council. Randolph and Owen willingly agreed to the arrangement. According to historian Cornelius Bynum, the pair saw the editorship as a vehicle through which they could begin to circulate their critiques of capitalism. The arrangement between Randolph, Owen, and the Society soured when the new editors began to use the pages of

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<sup>61</sup> Hahn, *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom*, 126; Theodore Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (Oakland: Nzinga Publishing, 1988), 102,159.

the *Hotel Messenger* to expose the corruption of the Society's leadership. When the relationship between Randolph, Owen, and Society dissolved Randolph and Owen kept the printing equipment, relocated their offices and simply dropped the word "Hotel" from their publication's title.<sup>62</sup>

The first issue of the now independent *Messenger* was published in November 1917. By the end of the decade the journal had become financially stable enough to publish on a monthly schedule. As Theodore Vincent observed, *The Messenger's* editorial philosophy held that the roots of racism and racial oppression were rooted in the competitive nature of capitalism.<sup>63</sup> Bynum had likewise noted that editing and writing for the *Messenger* placed Randolph in a position to begin to "distill his criticisms of industrial capitalism into a comprehensive worldview that underscored in stark terms the fundamental connections between social justice, industrial organization, and racial discrimination."<sup>64</sup>

Cyril Brigg's African Blood Brotherhood was also a significant part of the WWI black political landscape. Formed in 1919 and headquartered in New York, the African Blood Brotherhood shared the UNIA's nationalist political orientation. While the UNIA and the ABB shared similar ideological perspectives on black liberation they differed with regard to their strategic focuses. As opposed to paralleling the UNIA's strategic focus on the economic development of black America, the ABB's strand of nationalism concentrated on the self-defense of black communities. According to historian Mark Solomon, Briggs and the ABB, "...sought to draw together the themes of race patriotism,

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<sup>62</sup> Cornelius Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 86-87.

<sup>63</sup> Vincent, 63-64.

<sup>64</sup> Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, 85.

anti-capitalism, anti-colonialism, and organized self-defense against racial assault.”<sup>65</sup>

The ABB offered its members fraternal relations, benevolence programs, and calisthenics training. The ABB was also comparatively much smaller in size relative to both the UNIA and the NAACP. The ABB only comprised of a few thousand members during its peak of influence during the 1920s and was organizationally concentrated in cities including New York, Chicago, Baltimore, Tulsa, and Omaha, with additional chapters in the Caribbean. The ABB’s monthly news magazine, *Crusader*, established in 1918, injected another voice into the New Negro wave of the liberation struggle’s political discourse.

In the wake of a failed attempt to usurp control of the UNIA away from Garvey, Briggs and the ABB began to gravitate towards a socialist ideological perspective. By 1921 the ABB had aligned itself with the relatively young American Communist Party and Briggs himself had become a member. Briggs and the ABB bridged the ideological gap between nationalism and socialism. According to Solomon, Briggs envisioned a black Nationalist state whose independence and future development were rooted in the socialist structuring of its government and its economy.<sup>66</sup>

While the WWI black political landscape was accentuated by sharp debates and conflicts between socio-political leaders promoting competing ideological visions of black liberation—most notable between Garvey’s UNIA and the rest—their was a noticeably strong degree of consensus across the ideologically diverse landscape in relation to the perspectives socio-political leaders had regarding jazz. The national public’s awareness of jazz music’s existence had grown alongside the surge in black

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<sup>65</sup> Mark Solomon, *The Cry was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-1936* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1998), 9-10.

<sup>66</sup> Vincent, 74-78; Solomon, *The Cry was Unity*, 13-14.

socio-political activism during the war. The same year that the Original Dixieland Jazz Band recorded the first jazz album and dozens of New Orleans jazzmen carried the music out of the Crescent City, Marcus Garvey incorporated the first UNIA chapter in the United States and A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen began publishing *The Messenger*. As each respective organization began to incorporate culture and cultural production as factors in their strategic equations for black liberation they could not—and did not—avoid acknowledging the new music’s existence within the cultural landscape.

They had to address jazz music. The American public widely acknowledged the fact that jazz was the next step in the evolution of black folk music. Jazz came from the black American communities on whose behalf they all claimed to speak. The music had a black racial identity, and as a result, assumed the negative racial stereotypes associated with it. Jazz emerged in an intellectual climate influenced by eugenicist theories positing that the black race was inherently inferior to whites. Miscegenation arose as a major social concern within this climate and blackness was viewed as a corrosive agent threatening the genetic quality of white America. The immensely popular 1914 film *Birth of a Nation* demonstrated how scientific rationale flowed into the popular cultural imagination. Set during Reconstruction the film depicted an American South held hostage by corrupt, animalistic, menacing black elected official and Union soldiers. Jazz’s blackness ensured that the American public would define the music using those same characteristics. The music’s reputation had been predetermined, and was quickly defined as the aural manifestation of vice. The music’s new and unique sounds were believed to inspire sexual promiscuity and the abandonment of moral restraint in its listeners. The imagined threat that jazz posed to the virtues of American society had

grown strong enough to compel the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* to publish a 1918 article disavowing the city's reputation as the music's birthplace.<sup>67</sup>

Jazz music's reputation as a catalyst for the decay of American morality both influenced and framed the ways in which the music was discussed within the NAACP, the ABB, the *Messenger*, and the UNIA. Activists within each of these organizations had to account for jazz music's negative public image in their assessments of the role that black musical skill and creativity might play within the liberation struggle. Socio-political leaders within each of these organizations discounted their valuations of jazz as a political resource based upon the music's troubled social identity. Rather than elevate the significance of black folk music within the struggle black leaders and organizations favored—for slightly different reasons—the creative contributions of black musicians who excelled within the European classical and concert traditions. Integrationist's goals of acculturating into Euro-American society naturally produced a bias towards European cultural forms. They valued the work of black musicians performing within those traditions because their individual contributions to those traditions served as another form of evidence supporting their arguments for black social equality within Euro-American society. Socialists, on the other hand, dismissed the new music's relevance to the struggle because of its immense popularity. For them, jazz was another example of the corruptible powers of modern capitalism. The music was not the product of the unhindered creativity of the musician, but its aesthetics reflected the will of the consumer

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<sup>67</sup> For additional information regarding the Eugenics movement within the sciences, social sciences and the movement's funding see William H. Tucker, *The Funding of Scientific Racism: Wickliffe Draper and the Pioneer Fund* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 23-43; Leonard Neil, *Jazz and the White Americans: The Acceptance of a New Art Form* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); "Jass and Jassmin," *The Times-Picayune*, 20 June 1918, 4 (republished in *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, ed. Robert Walser (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 7-8.

within the marketplace. Jazz was not art; it was a commodity posing as art. European music forms by contrast were considered aesthetically pure. Because the music of black classical and concert musicians was less commercially popular their music was less subject to the consumer's will. Nationalists' investment in the European musical tradition seemed curious given their strategic focus on black nation building. The black folk music tradition had the potential to lay the cultural foundation upon which political nationalism could grow. Yet the socio-political leaders establishing the Nationalist perspective regarding the political value of culture likewise celebrated the work of black musicians making names for themselves in the concert and classical genres. In doing so, they hoped to strategically use their contributions to exhibit black racial superiority. They ironically allowed the Euro-American society whose racial hegemony they sought to challenge to establish the measurements of musical aesthetics. Significant contradictions existed between Nationalists' outspoken philosophical perspectives regarding jazz and the role the music played in organizing the grassroots of nationalist movements. Despite Nationalists' dismissal of jazz's aesthetic value, they needed the music to help encourage the political participation of the black masses within the movement activities they led. The remainder of this chapter will examine the cultural strategies pursued by integrationists, nationalists, and socialists, vis-à-vis the NAACP, UNIA, ABB, and the *Messenger*, and will highlight the ways in which jazz did and did not factor into their respective efforts.

Acculturationists' strategic use of culture within the liberation struggle blossomed within the context of the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance described the cultural reawakening of black America that began at the end of World War I and



stretched into the early 1930s. The Great Migration helped to inspire the boom in black artists' creative output during this period. The migration had not only produced a major demographic redistribution of the black American population but it also created a new black urban existence, one that offered black artists a wealth of new identities, communities, experiences, and challenges to interpret creatively. Black artists followed the thousands and thousands of black Americans flowing into the urban north in hopes of capturing creative inspiration from a black identity redefining itself through the prism of urban life. Harlem became a popular migratory destination for black America's artistic vanguard. In addition to serving as the political capital of black America New York was also the epicenter of the literary, musical, and theatre industries. A new generation of celebrated African American writers, visual artists, and musicians, including Countee Cullen, Jessie Faucet, Nella Larsen, Claude McKay, Zora Hurston, Langston Hughes, Romare Bearden, Palmer Hayden, Marion Anderson, Revella Hughes, and Roland Hayes, some with the financial support of white paternalistic patrons, transformed Harlem into an incubator of cultural production.

It is important to remember that integrationist socio-political organizations did not actually create the Harlem Renaissance. They sought to take advantage of the artistic phenomenon. The NAACP and other integrationist-minded African American political organizations, including the more conservative Urban League, viewed the streaming flow of talented artists into the city as a valuable opportunity. Acculturationists moved to harness the explosion in cultural production and use it to capture the hearts and minds of white America. Black arts and letters had the potential to arouse white America's support for integration. Acculturationists consequently focused their resources on

stimulating artistic creativity. DuBois, as the editor of the NAACP's *Crisis* and Charles S. Johnson, editor of the Urban League's *Opportunity*, sponsored literary contests and published the winning entries. The themes, subjects, and styles of the entries selected for publication generally reflected the Euro-centric cultural values of the New Negro. *Crisis* and *Opportunity* also dedicated space to cultural criticism and news regarding black arts, letters, and music. James Weldon Johnson and Alain Locke's intellectual insight provided the critical perspective validating the work of an emerging vanguard of young black artists. Black socio-political integrationist organizations, especially the NAACP, used their publications, influence and patronage to encourage the artistic representation of a tailored image of black America. They transformed the Harlem Renaissance into a public relations campaign presenting an African American image that they hoped would stimulate audiences to rethink ideas regarding black racial inferiority. Historian Jacob Dorman has recently characterized the image of Harlem as a thriving bastion of artistic creativity, dazzling cabaret styled entertainment, and heightened political consciousness, as an "abstraction" of the lived experiences of the vast majority of Harlem's black working class residents.<sup>68</sup>

The organization of Black Swan Records during the immediate post-WWI years stands out as one of the strongest examples of New Negro acculturationists' strategic initiatives to harness the work of black musicians to support socio-political objectives. Black Swan Records was the subsidiary recording label of the African American-owned

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<sup>68</sup> Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 29, 65; Jacob S. Dorman, "Back to Harlem: Abstract and Everyday Labor during the Harlem Renaissance," *The Harlem Renaissance Revisited* ed. Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 74-90; for additional information on the relationship between socio-political organizations and black writers during the Harlem Renaissance see Abby Ann Arthur Johnson and Ronald M. Johnson, "Forgotten Pages: Black Literary Magazines in the 1920s," *Journal of American Studies* 8, no. 3 (December 1974), 363-382.

Pace Phonograph Corporation, founded in 1921 by Harry Pace. Before founding the Pace Phonograph Corporation Harry Pace had been W.C. Handy's business partner in a joint venture focused on publishing blues and ragtime sheet music. Inspired by the ascendancy of the New Negro and the momentum of the Harlem Renaissance Pace decided to end his partnership with Handy and venture into the relatively young music recording industry. Pace desired to use Black Swan Records to provide African American classical, concert, and spirituals performers a voice that an otherwise racist recording industry denied. He speculated that recording African American performers working in the European music tradition, like vocalist Carroll Clark and pianist Revella Hughes, would be profitable because the genre was underrepresented in the rapidly growing market for race records.<sup>69</sup>

David Suisman has demonstrated that the label was also created with a political purpose in mind. Black Swan was Pace's contribution to the integrationist wing of the New Negro movement. Pace used the label to promote African American business ownership, create uplifting music, and assault white America's assumptions regarding African Americans' alleged inferiority. Harry Pace and Black Swan Records had strong ties to acculturationist political leaders and organizations. Pace was a former Atlanta University student who had studied under DuBois. He graduated the same year *The Souls of Black Folk* was published. The label's music director, Fletcher Henderson—in the years before he was celebrated as a jazz musician and bandleader—was also an Atlanta University alumnus. Henderson completed Atlanta University in 1920 with a great degree of classical music training. The NAACP's voice was represented at the

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<sup>69</sup> Jeffrey Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing: Fletcher Henderson and Big Band Jazz* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 21-22

highest level of decision making within the Pace Phonograph Corporation. DuBois, and John Neil, brother-in-law of James Weldon Johnson, both sat on the corporation's board of directors.<sup>70</sup>

Historians examining the role that Harlem Renaissance era African American music played in helping acculturationists propagandize white Americans to reassess their ideas of race have taken note of jazz music's minimal presence within that initiative. Nathan Huggins, in his classic study of the period wrote that, "None of [the Harlem Renaissance leadership] took jazz – the new music – seriously."<sup>71</sup> Several explanations have been offered illuminating why acculturationist leaders consciously chose to exclude the "new music" from the pool of cultural resources from which they drew. Some scholars have cited the lack of tradition that jazz music held at the beginning of the 1920s as the reason for its absence. African American spirituals for instance, which Du Bois praised in *Souls of Black Folks* and Locke cited as an example of African Americans making good on their social responsibility to contribute to the nation, were grounded in a musical tradition with much deeper roots than jazz was in the 1920s. The spirituals had a history. Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison have argued that renaissance leaders valued the spirituals' history and tradition because they could potentially be used to unite black America in the quest to integrate into broader white American society. Others have suggested that the Harlem Renaissance leadership viewed jazz music as too rudimentary and crude a musical form to accomplish their integrationist goals. Jazz, in the minds of

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<sup>70</sup> David Suisman, "Co-Workers in the Kingdom of Culture: Black Swan Records and the Political Economy of African American Music," *Journal of American History* 90, No. 4, (March 2004), 1295-1324, 1297; Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing*, 17-21.

<sup>71</sup> Nathan Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 10.

these leaders, lacked the necessary respectability needed to demonstrate African Americans' ability to meaningfully contribute to the nation.<sup>72</sup>

Jazz music received little public discussion within acculturationist circles during the first decade of the renaissance. In the few instances that the music was discussed its negative reputation was usually a prominent feature in the conversation. Writer Joel A. Rodgers' 1925 essay, "Jazz at Home," the only major critical examination of jazz deriving from the acculturationist segment of the liberation struggle during the first decade of the renaissance, initiated a discussion of jazz that attempted to clarify the relationship between the music and the reputation it had developed. The music itself was not problematic for Rodgers. He held it in the same regard as the politically valued spirituals. He suggested that jazz and spirituals were twin cultural products, the former expressing the comedic and the latter expressing the tragic, each representing the opposite end of emotional poles, but functionally serving the same cathartic purpose. Rodgers wrote, "the true spirit of jazz is a joyous revolt from convention, custom, authority, boredom, and even sorrow – from everything that would confine the soul of man and hinder its riding free on the air" and that "[jazz] is by no means to be despised...".<sup>73</sup> The social context of jazz music's consumption, "the none too respectable cabaret," muddled the music's potential use as an example of racial advancement and pride in Rogers' view. Rogers wrote that for the industrious and productive citizen

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<sup>72</sup> For more on the idea that jazz as a musical form was not developed enough see, John Michael Spencer, *The New Negroes and Their Music: The Success of the Harlem Renaissance* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), xx; For more on the belief that jazz music was too commercial see Eric Porter, *What is this Thing Called Jazz*, 11-13; Ted Vincent, *The Black Activists who Built the Jazz Age* (East Haven, CT: Pluto Press, 1995), 162; For more on the political value of musical tradition within the integrationist movement see Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 75.

<sup>73</sup> Joel A. Rodgers, "Jazz at Home," *The New Negro*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: A.C. Boni, 1925), 217, 220.

listening to jazz for uplift, the music offered a safer numbing effect than alcohol or drugs. For the idle and lazy however, the social context of consuming jazz held peril. The social setting in which jazz was consumed was especially risky for African Americans, regardless of the strength of their work ethic and values. The relatively expensive cover charge of admissions barred most African Americans from listening to jazz in the sterilized and vice-free venues where the music could safely be consumed. Jim Crow admissions policies barred the entrance of the few African Americans who could afford to pay those admissions fees. Black jazz consumption was limited to the “saloon” or “wayside inn” as a result of cost and Jim Crow. Working class African Americans were vulnerable, Rogers argued, to the influences of Harlem’s “bootleggers” and “gamblers,” and a host of related illicit activity, as they attempted to sooth their souls with jazz in those venues.<sup>74</sup> Rogers believed that until jazz music broke free from its association with the low cabaret and brothel it would be of little use as a political resource for integrationists in the context of their Harlem Renaissance-based political project.

An article discussing the spring 1930 European tour of the Hampton Institute Choir, written by the ensemble’s director R. Nathaniel Dett, in the December 1930 issue of *Crisis*, continued to dismiss jazz as a resource suitable for acculturationist’s strategy of using the arts to recast race relations. Much of Dett’s reporting on the choir’s international travels focused on their voyage across the Atlantic on the French steamboat, *De Grasse*. Their time spent in passage was especially noteworthy for Dett because of the success that *he* believed his students achieved when it came to the business of shattering the racialized stereotypes of blacks held by the *De Grasse*’s white passengers. Dett took care to outline the ways in which his students’ conservative demeanor,

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<sup>74</sup> Rodgers, “Jazz at Home,” 222-223.

passively unobtrusive behavior, and reserved politeness both confused and made curious the white passengers aboard.

Dett reported that, as the passengers grew familiar with the students and learned that they were a choir, the greatest racial stereotype they contradicted was the belief that all African American musical groups performed jazz. Dett's group was staunch in their resolve to exclude any traces of jazz, or any other musical genre of African American origin, from its repertoire. Dett wrote, "When it became known that the choir's repertoire contained only classical music and that most of this was of a religious nature, wonder gave place to a sort of amused surprise, and it seemed for a while that by their refusal to sing jazz, members of the Hampton Choir would ostracize themselves."<sup>75</sup> Dett took pride in the bemusement his anti-jazz policy stirred in the white passengers. He believed that causing white passengers to contemplate the disconnect in the faulty logic of racial stereotypes—that *because* jazz is of African American origin, *then* all African American musical groups *must* perform jazz—was a valuable contribution to the integrationist movement. He believed that his group's choices regarding what they sang, and more importantly what they did not, forced whites to reconsider their perspectives on race; which was after all, the goal of culture's political use.

Dett's glorification of the Hampton Institute Choir's anti-jazz repertoire policy did draw strong criticism in the following January 1931 issue of *Crisis*. Journalist and Marxist Benjamin Stolberg confined Dett's disdainful view of jazz into a perspective rooted in racial prejudice, one that accepted an assumed black racial inferiority. Stolberg blasted Dett's portrayal of the Hampton students' reserved demeanor and conservative behavior as a sad denial of true African American subjectivity. He suggested that

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<sup>75</sup> R. Nathaniel Dett, "A Musical Invasion of Europe," *The Crisis*, December 1930, 405-407.

youthful college students were expected to, and should, indulge in a drink or a card game, if they so desired. The greatest example of Dett's acceptance of black racial inferiority, in Stolberg's eyes, was Dett's policy banning music styles of African American origin. Stolberg wrote, "If the Hampton Choir cannot sing spirituals and even play jazz, the worse for its musicianship."<sup>76</sup> Ultimately, Stolberg used this opportunity to question the effectiveness of the entire cultural strategy that undergirded the Harlem Renaissance. He argued that the 'social work' and 'racial betterment' that renaissance cultural products supposedly performed were useless in fighting against a race prejudice that was economically determined. Stolberg wrote, "...that constant boasting about the preferential treatment which the New Negro artist and writer receive will not solve the racial and cultural segregation of the millions of the colored masses."<sup>77</sup>

Discussion of jazz music was few and far between within the pages of Johnson's *Opportunity* during the first decade of the renaissance. A three-column editorial about the music did appear in the May 1925 issue of the magazine. Once again, however, the music's negative social reputation established the tone of the article. The editorial began with a survey of negative comments issued about the music from America's intellectual and cultural elite. The article reported that the Etymological Dictionary of Modern English suggested that the term "jazz," as used in popular culture, signified, "a number of niggers surrounded by noise—a kind of ragtime dance introduced from the United States...a word taken from Negro Jargon." American composer Horatio Parker had referred to the music as, "naked African rhythm, and no more." American writer and

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<sup>76</sup> Benjamin Stolberg, "Classical Music and Virtuous Ladies: A Note on Colored Folks' Prejudices," *The Crisis*, January 1931, 23-24, 24.

<sup>77</sup> Stolberg, "Classical Music and Virtuous Ladies," 24.



educator Henry Van Dyck described jazz as, “a species of music invented by demons for the torment of imbeciles” in an address before the National Education Association.<sup>78</sup>

Against the backdrop of jazz music’s negative image among leading American intellectuals the article focused on the rising international awareness of jazz music, especially among Europeans. The author noted the ways in which European audiences used jazz to derive an understanding of American culture at large. Jazz was quickly becoming recognized as America’s primary cultural export in the international arena. As jazz’s role as a representative of musical forms created in America grew on the opposite shore of the Atlantic, the music became the most visible of American musical culture. Jazz had become “...a sign and symbol of the American pace,—of its moving spirit” in the perspectives of European music listeners. The fact that European audiences were using jazz to derive an understanding of American cultural expression produced an intriguing paradox. The article suggested, “They, who of all Americans are the most limited in self-expression, least considered and most denied, have forged the key to the interpretation of the American spirit.” The article left the question of what this paradox meant and how it would be resolved unanswered.<sup>79</sup>

Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen’s *Messenger* also played a significant role as an outlet for black creative expression during the Harlem Renaissance. Similar to *Crisis* and *Opportunity*, mention of jazz within the pages of the *Messenger* was relatively infrequent. A sharp criticism of the music did appear in a 1923 article titled “The Divinity of Jazz.” The article suggested that in collectively listening to jazz, society’s “...prohibited instincts riot disgustingly here like thirsty men in a desert oasis; we revel in

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<sup>78</sup> “Jazz,” *Opportunity*, May 1925, 132-133.

<sup>79</sup> “Jazz,” 132-133.

jazz. This lets of steam but it deplorably cheapens our instincts and corrupts the true spirit of music. Jazz is essentially a capitalist production; it steals its melodies from all sources...then proceeds to ruin them. It is as noisy and rapacious as the system that creates it.”<sup>80</sup> The *Messenger*’s views of jazz fell in line with its broader critique of capitalism. The music was proof of capitalism’s corrosive effects upon society and culture. Because jazz was subject to the will of the free market, as evidenced by jazz’s rapidly growing popularity, the music’s aesthetic purity was open to contamination. The music stemmed not from the creative imaginations of musicians but from the desires of capitalist consumers. Jazz, from the socialist perspective, was too commercial a musical form to put to productive political use.

Jazz and its image fared little better within the pages of Cyril Briggs *Crusader*. Music was first discussed in the *Crusader* in its January 1919 issue. The “Men of Our Times” reoccurring column recognized the accomplishments of musician and composer W.C. Handy. While the profile acknowledged the fact that Handy’s notoriety as a composer was connected to his role in composing and publishing blues songs, like “Memphis Blues,” the article concentrated on Handy’s reported attempts to artistically elevate black folk music. The profile noted that, “Mr. Handy intends on making use of the Tercentenary [presumably referencing the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1619 arrival of Africans into Jamestown], to show that those BLUES can be woven into beautiful symphonies and a truly higher art form.”<sup>81</sup> The creation of music stemming from the black folk tradition were not accomplishments in themselves, but only served as a point of origin in the effort to create musical forms with aesthetic worth, musical forms within

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<sup>80</sup> “The Divinity of Jazz,” *Messenger*, 1923 quoted in Ted Vincent, *The Black Activists who Build the Jazz Age* (East Haven, CT: Pluto Press, 1995), 162.

<sup>81</sup> “Men of Our Time,” *Crusader Magazine* 1, No. 5, January 1919, 11.

the European music tradition. It was ironic that in an intellectual age characterized by eugenics that a nationalist-focused organization—as the ABB was at the time—would characterize black folk music as the less evolved antecedent to European-based high art music. The *Crusader's* privileging of the European music tradition, especially at the expense of black folk music, was a consistent theme over the course of the publication's four-year run. The *Crusader's* views on music reflected Cyril Briggs' personal tastes. Briggs had described a 1921 recital featuring baritone concert vocalist Walter M. Hunter, whose performance included a combination of Negro spirituals and Italian opera, the “classiest social functions New York had witnessed this season.”<sup>82</sup>

In light of the *Crusader's* views on black folk music it was noteworthy that Handy was profiled in a column reserved for black men making significant contributions to the advancement of black America. His profile might be explained by the fact that the Pace and Handy Music Company, of which W.C. Handy was part owner, was one of the *Crusader's* leading advertisers. The Pace and Handy Music Company often purchased a full-page advertisement opposite the magazine's front cover. Indeed, the only other positive mention black folk music received within the pages of the *Crusader* came in the form of a February 1921 profile of blues singer Mamie Smith, who had previously recorded with Pace and Handy. Smith, however, was characterized as a singer within the concert tradition in the profile and not the vocalist actively making black folk music famous.<sup>83</sup>

The *Crusader's* position on black folk music was further crystallized in an April 1919 editorial penned by William H. Briggs titled “The Power and Influence of Music.”

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<sup>82</sup> C. Briggs, “Hunter Recital Draws Music Lovers,” *Crusader Magazine* 4, No. 1, March 1921, 15.

<sup>83</sup> “Mamie Smith Profile,” *Crusader Magazine* 3, No. 6, February 1921, 6.

The primary focus of the piece was to explore the social value and purpose of “good music” in relation to the lived experience. Briggs argued that good music contained a moral and spiritual value, and that by listening to good music those values would transfer into the consciousness of the listener. Hearing good music would help sustain the listener’s emotional health and balance. Briggs defined good music as music within the European classical tradition. Briggs declared that, “If you associate with noble thoughts that constitute good—or, as you call it classical music, you will be counted with a higher class in the world of music.” In an effort to better help the *Crusader’s* readership distinguish between music that could contribute to their emotional health and music that could not Briggs pointed to black folk music as a comparative example. Briggs suggestively queried, “You might ask, do you believe the playing of modern ragtime pieces to be hurtful to anyone studying music? I do, indeed, unless it is done merely for frolic; those even such a mood might vent itself in better taste.” Black folk music had little social value to Briggs. In a moment in which the predominant view of jazz—outside of the black working class—suggested that the music was only useful in facilitating frivolous amusements, Briggs held that the music was inadequate even for that purpose. Ragtime, in Briggs opinion, was a vulgar music generated from vulgar impulses.<sup>84</sup> Beginning with the October 1921 issue of the *Crusader* the discussion of music became a regular feature. In that issue contributor Chas A. Henry introduced a column titled “Negro Musicians What of the Future.” In line with magazine’s celebration of the European music tradition the column highlighted the works and accomplishments of black Americans making contributions to the concert and classical idioms.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> William H. Briggs, “Power and Influence of Music,” *Crusader Magazine* 1, No. 8, April 1919, 12-13.

<sup>85</sup> Chas A. Henry, “Negro Musicians What of the Future?,” *Crusader Magazine* 3, No. 2, October 1920.

The image of jazz carried in the pages of the UNIA's *Negro World* reflected the perspective contained in the publications of other black socio-political organizations. In a 1921 article titled "Negro Music" written by William H. Farris, the *Negro World's* literary editor, suggested to the magazine's readership that black musicians could only advance creatively if black musicians could move beyond their black folk music foundation. According to Farris black folk music was simply the point of origin in the black musician's development. Jazz, ragtime, and blues were not serious musical genres. None of the black folk music forms were acceptable as the end result of black musical accomplishment. Farris noted, "Well the Negro is now developing real musicians, musicians who can master melody and harmony as well as rhythm, syncopation and jazz." Farris then went on to identify the men and women he considered to be making real contributions to music. The list of "real musicians" that Farris offered was comprised of musicians performing within the European classical tradition, and sharpening their musical skill performing the works of Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Strauss, and others. In reference to his list of black musicians performing within the European tradition Farris announced that, "All these things indicate that the Negro cannot only master and appreciate his own folk songs, but also the world's masterpieces. And he will undoubtedly accomplish greater things in the future."<sup>86</sup>

William Isles, the band director of the Black Star Line's flagship passenger vessel, the *S.S. Yarmouth*, shared Farris's perspectives on jazz. In a 1922 *Negro World* editorial titled "The Negro and Music" Isles voiced his concern regarding the lack of

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<sup>86</sup> William H. Farris, "Negro Music," *Negro World*, 1921 republished in Tony Martin, *African Fundamentalism: A Literary and Cultural Anthology of Garvey's Harlem Renaissance* (Dover, MA: The Majority Press, 1991), 298; for additional discussion on Farris' privileging of Anglo-American culture within the ideological framework of black nationalism see Wilson Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925* (New York: Archon Books, 1978), 211-217.

interest that emerging black musicians had in regard to performing within the European concert tradition. The majority of black musicians entering the profession during the post war era gravitated towards performing jazz. There was a growing market for jazz music and a strong need for professional jazz musicians to keep pace with demand. Isles complained that, “It is somewhat discouraging to state that although the time is ripe for the Negro to display his skills and ability in the field of fine art and higher learning, there should be an unwillingness on his part to advance into a higher musical development.” The fact that black musicians chose jazz as opposed to pursuing “higher musical development” exposed black America’s complacency with their oppressed and marginalized position within the United States. Isles suggested that black musicians made that decision because, “...for years and years [the black musician] has imbibed the teachings that ragtime was his, and there he stayed and worked and worked until he was crowned king of rags, and now he is told that jazz is his, and he seems willing to stay here and work and work to be crowned king of jazz.” Isles explained to *Negro World* readers how jazz acted as a racial handicap that crippled the black musician’s ability to evolve in their craft. Jazz was simply another manifestation of the limitations white America imposed upon their black counterparts, another hindrance on black America’s struggle for advancement.<sup>87</sup>

While generally poised as opposing poles of the black political spectrum, both acculturationists and nationalists found common ground in their privileging the elevation of black musicians performing within European forms over the continued development of black folk musical genres like jazz. Based on the viewpoints offered in the

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<sup>87</sup> William H. Farris, “The Negro and Music,” *Negro World*, 1922 republished in Tony Martin, *African Fundamentalism: A Literary and Cultural Anthology of Garvey’s Harlem Renaissance* (Dover, MA: The Majority Press, 1991), 294-298.

acculturationist *Crisis* and *Opportunity* and the nationalist *Negro World* and *Crusader*, both integrationists and nationalists shared a desire to demonstrate the black races' ability to thrive artistically within the European cultural forms that represented the high culture prized by white America's elite. The motives compelling black socio-political organizations and leaders to promote black musicians performing European concert music differentiated integrationists and nationalists. Evidence that black musicians could make meaningful contributions to high culture supported the integrationist cause of acculturating blacks into American society as social, cultural, and political equals. For nationalists, however, the successes of black musicians performing within the European cultural tradition demonstrated that the black race was powerful enough to rival their white counterparts in both intellect and skill.

The overall relationship between jazz and the UNIA during the early years of the Harlem Renaissance era must be qualified. Jazz music did play an important role in some of the UNIA grassroots-focused activities despite the UNIA intellectual leadership's open criticism of the music in the pages of the *Negro World*. Vincent suggested that, "The UNIA's acceptance of 'soul music' distinguished it from traditional black groups, which acknowledged the worth of spirituals only grudgingly and bitterly denounced the 'debauched' strains of jazz."<sup>88</sup> Ideological beliefs regarding the value of black folk music, like jazz, did not separate the UNIA from other New Negro organizations, as the comparative analysis of New Negro socio-political publications shows. What "distinguished" the UNIA from the rest of the pack was the UNIA's structure of political activism. During the early years of post-WWI Harlem Renaissance the UNIA was the only New Negro organization with a specific goal of building a large membership base

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<sup>88</sup> Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement*, 123-124.

among the black masses. While growing in size during this period the NAACP was primarily concerned with courting the talented tenth. The ABB was more concerned with co-opting pre-existing organizational structures, first the UNIA's and later dissolving into the American Communist Party, as opposed to crafting its own large-scale organizational base. Nor was there an organizational entity associated with Randolph and Owen's *Messenger*.

Because the UNIA desired to attract large numbers of black Americans into its ranks the organization needed to find strategic ways instigate mass participation in its events and activities. Jazz became politically valuable to the UNIA and its membership building efforts because jazz could be used as an instigating agent, the music could draw a crowd. Jazz played an active role in the social lives of the black Americans he hoped to recruit. Garvey must have taken note of jazz music's welcomed presence in the black communities he visited during his thirty-eight state tour across the United States between 1919 and 1920. The UNIA's incorporation of jazz music into their mass-audience functions reflected such an understanding. Garvey chose J. Arnold Ford, a former member of James Reese Europe's Harlem Hell Fighter military band, known for providing European audiences its first exposure to jazz music, as the UNIA's musical director. The larger UNIA chapters, including the Harlem, Chicago, New Orleans, Los Angeles, and Kansas City branches, established their own jazz dance bands comprised of local semi-professional musicians. These bands and the dances and social activities they hosted likely played a key role in drawing potential UNIA members to local UNIA events. Those patrons coming to dance were also exposed to the organization's political views. And while William Isles was discouraged by black musicians' sole interests in



jazz he and his Black Star Line played the music aboard the *S.S. Yarmouth* to help attract and entertain passengers.<sup>89</sup>

Beginning during the mid to late-1920s—as the following chapter will address vis-à-vis the political mobilization of Duke Ellington’s music—other leading black socio-political organizations across the ideologically diverse political spectrum also began to mobilize jazz music as a political resource as their structures of political activism began to change. After Randolph’s socialist voice found an organizational body in the form of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters labor union, jazz became an important part of Randolph’s efforts to attract financial contributions. Likewise, jazz became an integral part of the NAACP’s efforts to grow its organizational fundraising capacity, especially during the Great Depression. In the wake of the Communist Party’s absorption of the ABB and the development of new perspectives regarding the party’s stance on racism as a distinct form of working-class oppression, jazz became increasingly used as a method of creating displays of interracial unity.

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<sup>89</sup> David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem was in Vogue* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), 3; Ted Vincent, *The Black Activists who Build the Jazz Age* (East Haven, CT: Pluto Press, 1995), 114-115, 128; Bush, 95.

CHAPTER 2  
“‘SAYS DUKE’S CONCERT ADVANCED RACE 20 YEARS,’ THE NEW NEGROS  
PUT JAZZ TO POLITICAL WORK, 1925-1943”<sup>90</sup>

In December 1929 the relatively new Women’s Auxiliary to the NAACP National Office organized a benefit show to raise money to help fund the activities of the national headquarters. The benefit show relied upon “hot” jazz music, along with Broadway theatrical entertainment, and a prominent roster of performers to attract audiences with money to spend. Duke Ellington and his Cotton Club Orchestra, perhaps the most popular and well-known African American jazz band at the moment, topped the drawing card. This particular production was not the first benefit staged by the Women’s Auxiliary, but it was the first to incorporate “hot” jazz, a musical style of jazz that racially signified blackness, into the show. Jazz music had become apart of the Black Liberation Struggle. The music was transformed into a political resource; one valued for its growing commercial appeal and marketplace popularity. The NAACP’s incorporation of jazz music into the acculturationist side of the New Negro Movement during the interwar years signaled the beginning of a significant paradigm shift in the entire Black Liberation Struggle’s perspective on jazz and its potential political uses. Those within the leadership ranks of liberation struggle organizations became willing to look past the negative social reputation that had handicapped the music in earlier years. Changes in the structure of socio-political activism within the New Negro Movement triggered that paradigm shift. In the case of the NAACP, those structural changes were tied to the official creation of the Women’s Auxiliary and its domain over the NAACP’s New York

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<sup>90</sup> Dan Burley, “Says Duke’s Concert Advanced Race 20 Years,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 30 January 1943, p. 17

area fundraising activities; a responsibility of increasing significance in the context of the depression.

The NAACP was not the only socio-political organization undergoing structural changes in their approach towards activism. Changes in the structure of New Negro socio-political activism spanned the spectrum of black political ideology. By 1929 the UNIA was well into the beginning of its gradual decline. The structural collapse of the UNIA was tied to the downfall of the organization's charismatic leader. In 1922 Marcus Garvey was arrested for mail fraud. The charge against Garvey was rooted in the allegation that Garvey was defrauding the black American public out of their hard earned money through the sale of stock shares of the UNIA's Black Star Line Corporation. Money that had been generated as a result of Black Star Line stock sales had been funneled into other UNIA business enterprises. Because Garvey had used the United States mail service to distribute Black Star Line shares he was charged with using to mail service to perpetrate fraud, a violation of federal law. Garvey was incarcerated for the crime in 1925 and was sent to Atlanta's federal prison. Two years later, after a pardon from President Coolidge, Garvey was deported to his native Jamaica. Without Garvey's presence sustaining the organizational strength of the UNIA, the organization began to crumble. The UNIA's nationally circulating political organ, the *Negro World*, suspended publication in 1933. The structural framework that had transformed black political nationalist ideology into action during the early years of the New Negro Movement eroded with the derailment of the UNIA.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Edmund David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 100, 138-157; Theodore G. Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (Berkeley: Ramparts Press, 1972), 219.

By the late 1920s Black Nationalist ideology had also lost the structural footing that the African Blood Brotherhood had provided. In the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution the ABB's leadership abandoned its nationalist orientation and gravitated towards the ideology of the emerging American Communist Party (CPUSA). In 1921 Cyril Briggs formally joined the party, allowing for the ABB to be absorbed into CPUSA. And in doing so, according to historian Mark Solomon, Briggs brought communist ideology into the liberation struggle's political landscape. Black membership within CPUSA grew slowly. The party's Harlem branch could only claim forty-seven black members by mid-decade. The CPUSA's race-blind strategy in its struggle against capitalist systems, coupled with the racist views of the party's white American membership, created significant barriers in the party's black recruitment efforts. In 1925 CPUSA, at the urging of Communist international, began to recognize that racial discrimination was a unique element of capitalist class oppression. CPUSA's change in perspective regarding race and capitalism prompted the party to implement strategic changes in their structure of activism that would allow the party to begin to organize all-black unions. Hot jazz, and its ability to attract black working class audiences became a significant part of the party's new efforts to grow its black working class membership in the wake of these philosophical and structural shifts.<sup>92</sup>

The organization of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, under the leadership of A. Philip Randolph in 1925, provided a structural framework for the socialist ideology that Randolph's *Messenger* had heralded since 1917. Historian Cornelius Bynum recently noted the significant influence Randolph's experiences with the Brotherhood of

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<sup>92</sup> Mark Solomon, *The Cry was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917 – 1936* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1998), 16,49.

Sleeping Car Porters had on the growth of his philosophical understanding of socialism. His battles within the BSCP were instrumental in evolving his views on the relationship between race and class struggle. Similar to changing views within the Communist Party, Randolph increasingly began to recognize that black Americans' position within the capitalist framework of the United States economy could not be solved through an approach defined exclusively by race-blind labor activism. Randolph's confrontations with the Pullman Company and the American Federation of Labor revealed the importance of all-black unions and broad based black community solidarity in his socialist-based strategies of socio-political activism. Hot jazz became one of the political resources that Randolph and the BSCP turned in an effort to cultivate solidarity between the brotherhood's membership and the supportive black community at large.<sup>93</sup>

The early political mobilizations of jazz music within the liberation struggle typically took shape in the form of benefit shows and concerts. While hot jazz had been viewed as too commercial and too morally corrupt across the political spectrum during the late 1910s and early 1920s, the music's political value during the late 1920s and beyond was rooted in the music's wide ranging commercial appeal, an appeal that cut across race and class boundaries. A range of African American jazz musicians, including Fess Williams, Cab Calloway, Fletcher Henderson, and many more local Harlem groups, made available their talent and craft to support the activities of liberation struggle organizations. Without diminishing the invaluable work these individuals performed on behalf of Black America's struggle for liberation, this chapter highlights the contributions of one jazz musician in particular, Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington.

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<sup>93</sup> Cornelius L. Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 119, 126, 141.

More than any other African American jazz musician Duke Ellington, and the members of his celebrated orchestra, stood at the crossroads of African American political activism and jazz during the interwar years. The Ellington Orchestra was without doubt the most commercially successful African American jazz band between the depression and WWII, and therefore the most politically valuable. Building a case study of the emerging relationship between jazz and New Negro activism around the example Ellington in particular is instructive for several key reasons. First, Ellington's hot jazz was political mobilized to help support the goals of acculturationists, socialists, and communists through performing benefit shows for the NAACP, The Urban League, the BSCP, and Communist Party organizations. The fact that these ideologically diverse liberation struggle organizations were all able to call upon Ellington's music reminds us of how fluid the ideological boundaries of black socio-political activism were during the interwar years. Despite the competition between liberation struggle organizations for the support of the black masses they all shared access to the same toolkit of political resources in respect to culture. Jazz, as a political resource, was highly elastic and stretched across the entire spectrum of black political ideology during the New Negro Movement wave. Ellington himself believed in black music's ability to simultaneously express multiple meanings and perform multiple functions. He once poetically wrote that, "Music is a beautiful woman in her prime. Music is a scrubwoman washing away the dirt and grime."<sup>94</sup> Jazz, according to Ellington, had the flexibility to do and be many things at once.

Second, Ellington was instrumental in expanding the role that jazz music played within the liberation struggle over the course of this period. The growing recognition of

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<sup>94</sup> Duke Ellington, *Music is My Mistress* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 39.

Ellington's musical genius, abroad and at home during the early 1930s, helped reshape the image of jazz music. As Ellington's compositional genius attracted the favorable attention of Europe's leading composers and critics, and his jazz gained legitimacy as a musical form making an aesthetic contribution to western music, black socio-political leaders, especially acculturationists, began to tout Ellington as a symbol of New Negro advancement. Ellington's image was politically mobilized as proof that black Americans could make meaningful contributions to American and Western society. Ellington's example supported the acculturationist belief that African Americans should be fully incorporated into American society as the social and political equals of their white American counterparts.

The portrayal of Ellington as an emblem of New Negro achievement was also made possible by arrival of the second generation of New Negro leadership into the liberation struggle. The second generation of New Negro leaders, generally born after the turn of the twentieth century, came of age in urban environments rich with the sounds of blues and hot jazz music. Jazz was a natural part of the urban soundscape of the second generation's lived experience. They were on the opposite side of a generational divide regarding the social perception of jazz music. The second generation of leadership did not hold the first generation's bias against the music because of its troubled social reputation. As the second generation of New Negro leaders entered the decision-making ranks of the struggle they showed no hesitation as they expanded the ways in which they mobilized jazz music to further the goals of the struggle.

Finally, examining the political mobilization of jazz through Ellington's example also illuminates the ways in which jazz musicians became grassroots activists themselves.

Inspired by the philosophies and strategies of the New Negro Movement Ellington used his creativity to produce music with a strong sense of New Negro race consciousness. In doing so, Ellington, as a political actor, moved towards the center of the struggle. The significance of his self-directed activism paralleled the important work of formal liberation struggle organizations fighting along the cultural front. Ellington's grassroots activism contributed to the beginning of a long trend of musicians mobilizing their own art on behalf of the struggle, a trend that continued throughout the duration of the twentieth century.

The remainder of this chapter uses Duke Ellington and his jazz as a focus point in its survey of the political work commercially appealing jazz music performed between the depression and the Second World War. This study is not the first to discuss Ellington and his music within the scope of black political activism during the interwar period. Past interpretations of Ellington's contributions towards black socio-political activism have been skewed significantly towards the acculturationist wing of the ideological spectrum. Scholars have used the strategies employed by acculturationists in the context of the Harlem Renaissance to explain the political work Ellington performed within the New Negro Movement. Again, during the Harlem Renaissance acculturationists used African American creative expressions as propaganda designed to compel white Americans to re-imagine their understandings of race relations. Scholars have turned the acculturationist Harlem Renaissance strategy into an interpretive theory that they have used to suggest that Ellington advanced African Americans by leading the masses through example. Ellington's performances and music, in this view, successfully coerced white Americans to reconsider their perspectives on race in the United States. Ellington's



presence performing before white audiences has been interpreted as transformative in this light.

Barry Ulanov, in the first biography of Duke Ellington's life and career, suggested that Ellington, his life, and his music revealed the humanity of the African American race. Exposure to the example of Ellington's humanity, according to Ulanov, had the potential to erode white racial prejudice. In fact, the desire to broaden exposure to Ellington's humanity was Ulanov's primary motivation for writing this early biography. He argued, "The integrity which is at stake is that of the American people, who have been a good deal less equitable [as compared to their white European counterparts] in their recognition of their own colored great. One of the purposes of this book is to call this malfeasance to the attention of my countrymen."<sup>95</sup>

Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison suggested that Ellington, by playing music "that appealed to a larger and more diverse white audience, especially when performed in the sanitized environment of the supper clubs with there brightly lit dance floors" he began to embody the Harlem Renaissance political goal of moving toward integrating African Americans into White America.<sup>96</sup> Likewise, Eric Porter underlined that, "Like other artists and intellectuals of the period, [Ellington] believed that the production and reception of black music would have an effect on the social understanding of African Americans."<sup>97</sup> Recently, Harvey Cohen suggested that, "For Ellington...the most effective African American protest in the American scene was to live and create in a way

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<sup>95</sup> Barry Ulanov, *Duke Ellington* (New York: Creative Age Press, 1946), ix, 4-6, 13

<sup>96</sup> Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 93.

<sup>97</sup> Eric Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 1.

that undermined racial barriers and stereotypes.”<sup>98</sup> For these authors Ellington’s race work was embedded in his grace, elegance, disarming charm, and eloquence; characteristics with the power to soften white racial attitudes towards blacks.

Ellington did believe in the work that Harlem Renaissance art and literature attempted to accomplish. Ellington’s investment in the political project behind the renaissance stemmed in part from his strong sense of race consciousness. This was a product of his coming of age in Washington, DC. Discussing Duke Ellington’s early life historian Mark Tucker noted that the Washington African American community that produced Ellington was “a place of promise. Its institutions were strong and its leading figures – in music, as in other professions – were men and women of learning, ambition, and discipline. Ellington may have spent his earliest years in a city deeply divided by race and class, but this same city inspired its black citizens to aim high and, in so doing, to move beyond category.” Tucker also noted that “...Ellington also inherited from Washington’s black community a fierce pride and innate privilege” and that “More important, they inspired him to become a composer who could express in music the feelings and aspirations of his race.”<sup>99</sup> Ellington’s race consciousness was the figurative constant in his evolving approach to making music and grew throughout his long career. No doubt that one of the important lessons that Ellington learned coming of age in Washington’s black community was the importance of garnering respect as an African American from his white counterparts. According to Ellington the act of commanding respect, “is a social credit that will never become outdated, unless one is blinded by the blazing light of apparent freedom and overemphasized equality, the sugar-substituted

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<sup>98</sup> Harvey Cohen, “The Marketing of Duke Ellington: Setting the Strategy for an African American Maestro,” *Journal of African American History* 89, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 291-314, 291.

<sup>99</sup> Mark Tucker, *Ellington: The Early Years* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 4, 15.

meringue of what is actually being served to those who don't believe they are getting it.”<sup>100</sup> Ellington surrounded himself with talented men of similar belief, especially within his Orchestra. Ellington described trumpet player Arthur Whetsol as “A great organization man, he would speak up in a minute on the subject of propriety, clean appearance, and reliability. If and when a member of our band made an error in grammar, he was quick to correct him. He was aware of all the Negro individuals who were contributing to the cause by *commanding respect*.” Rex Stewart, one of Ellington's cornetists, “had been taught the responsibility of commanding respect for his race and to this end he maintained an offstage image very deliberately. It was a dignified, decent-sort-of-chap image, and he never strayed far away from it, so that he was always posing to some extent and never really relaxed.”<sup>101</sup>

Solely using this Harlem Renaissance-based theoretical framework to assess the political relevance of Ellington's music during this period, however, narrows our understanding of the political work that jazz performed. The Harlem Renaissance based interpretation distracts our attention from the more direct mobilizations of Ellington's jazz in the form of benefit shows at the behest of political organizations and from the fact that Ellington's jazz was mobilized across the political spectrum. It is important to remember that commercially appealing, racialized jazz did not enter the liberation struggle through the efforts of the Harlem Renaissance intellegencia, but through the work of the Women's Auxiliary. And ironically, while jazz, vis-à-vis Duke Ellington, did become a method of demonstrating white America's need to reconsider its perspective on race, it did so after the Harlem Renaissance had come to an end.

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<sup>100</sup> Ellington, *Music is My Mistress*, 125.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 67, 125.

The desire to mobilize Ellington's jazz as a political resource grew out of his orchestra's rise to commercial success. Ellington's marketplace ascendancy has been well documented and scholars seem to agree that Ellington's success was largely based on the combination of his orchestra's unique sound and the quality of the Ellington organization's management. Ellington's paramount stature as the hottest commodity within the market for musical entrainment during the late 1920s was by no means instantaneous achieved. Ellington's first attempt to gain footing in the market for musical entertainment came in 1923 when Ellington, along with fellow musicians Otto Hardwick and Sonny Greer, traveled to New York, the epicenter of the musical world within the United States. Not only did New York contain hundreds of venues, from grandiose ballrooms to apartment speakeasies, in need of musicians but more importantly the city was also the commercial hub of the music publishing and recording industries. If Ellington was going to climb the professional ladder in the entertainment business cracking into New York's musical entertainment scene was the first rung. Ellington, Hardwick, and Greer had been performing together in Washington, DC before making the decision to try their fortunes in the Big Apple. The trio headed to Harlem at the invitation of Wilbur Sweatman, a vaudeville performer famous for playing three clarinets at the same time. Ellington had previously performed with Sweatman in Washington, DC. Now Ellington, Hardwick, and Greer were joining Sweatman for a week long engagement at Harlem's Lafayette Theatre beginning March 5<sup>th</sup>. The young Washington, DC musicians endeavored to remain in New York at the conclusion of their Lafayette Theatre engagement but finding additional work proved to be an insurmountable challenge. Nearly broke, they returned to the Capitol.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> John Hasse, *Beyond Category: The Musical Genius of Duke Ellington* (New York: Simon & Schuster,

Ellington was not discouraged by his first failed attempt to tap into New York's musical entertainment scene. In June of 1923 he returned to New York after receiving word from a friend about a job opportunity waiting for him. Unfortunately the opportunity had unraveled by the time Ellington reached New York, but he was able to find a job performing at Harlem's Exclusive Club, allowing him to remain in the city and begin the work of building connections in the music entertainment world.<sup>103</sup> Ellington's first significant break while in New York came in September 1923. Ellington, Hardwick, Greer, and Arthur Whetsol, joined Elmer Snowden's Black Sox Orchestra and began performing as the regular house band at the Hollywood Club, located in midtown Manhattan at 49<sup>th</sup> and Broadway. Not long after beginning their tenure at the Hollywood Club, which would last until the spring of 1927, the orchestra officially changed its name to the Washingtonians, reflective of its members' hometown. Ellington's abilities as a bandleader and a composer continued to grow while at the Hollywood Club. In February of 1924 Snowden left and Ellington became leader of the Washingtonians.<sup>104</sup>

In March 1925 the Hollywood Club temporarily closed to re-brand itself in an effort to remain current with the changing social and cultural tastes of the moment. The venue reopened as Club Kentucky, reflective of the growing interest among whites to come to Harlem to see and hear African American entertainers perform against a backdrop nostalgically reminiscent of the Old South. Not only did the club's name change but the orchestra was re-branded as well. The Washingtonians were now officially known as Duke Ellington and his Washingtonians; increasing Ellington's name recognition within the musical entertainment marketplace. During Ellington's four year

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1993), 62.

<sup>103</sup> Hasse, *Beyond Category*, 72-73.

<sup>104</sup> Ellington, 69-72.

tenure at the Hollywood Club/ Club Kentucky his musical organization recorded, under the name “Duke Ellington and his Kentucky Club Orchestra,” several of his most popular songs including “East St. Louis Toodle-Oo,” “Birmingham Breakdown,” and “Black and Tan.” Ellington’s orchestra’s sound also developed during this period, largely due personnel changes that introduced several gifted musicians with very unique musical voices into the group. The addition of trumpet player Bubber Miley in the fall of 1923 and trombonist Joe “Tricky Sam” Nanton were perhaps the most significant elements in establishing the distinctive Ellington sound during this period. They are the two musicians who have been most widely recognized for their ability to produce the gut-bucket growling sounds that were a trademark of the Ellington orchestra’s sound.<sup>105</sup>

The pace of Ellington’s rise to commercial success quickened in 1926 when he began a thirteen year relationship with business manager Irvin Mills. The relationship began when Mills, on the recommendation of an associate, went to Club Kentucky to hear Ellington’s Washingtonians. Mills was then working as a talent scout for Jack Mills Publishing Company, owned by his brother Jack. Mills’ constant search for original song writers and composers, whose work Jack Mills Publishing Co. could copyright and sell, sparked his interest in observing the Ellington orchestra’s unique sound first hand. Mills was not disappointed. He was so impressed with Ellington and his Washingtonians that he organized a recording session for the group. On November 29<sup>th</sup> Ellington recorded two songs during this session, “Birmingham Breakdown” and “East St. Louis Toodle-Oo,” the latter became the band’s first signature theme. Ellington Biographer John Hasse has noted that, “The association with Mills brought Ellington quick results. Besides

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<sup>105</sup> Hasse, 73-79, 83; Barry Ulanov’s early biography of Ellington contains a discography of recordings made by Ellington’s band, some of which were recorded under pseudonyms, in the book’s index, Barry Ulanov, *Duke Ellington* (New York: Creative Age Press, 1946), 280.

Brunswick, other major recording companies – Victor and Columbia – began recording him. The distribution of his recordings and resultant recognition increased sharply.” Ellington’s place within the market for musical entertainment was growing and the distribution of his music through recording companies like Brunswick, Victor, and Columbia spread awareness of the Ellington name across the nation.<sup>106</sup>

The expanded distribution of recorded music was not the only means by which Ellington’s commercial appeal expanded after the beginning of his association with Mills. The beginning of the Ellington Orchestra’s tenure as the regular house band at Harlem’s Cotton Club, located in the heart of Harlem on Lexington Avenue between 140<sup>th</sup> and 141<sup>st</sup> streets, also contributed to Ellington’s strengthening position in the musical entertainment marketplace. Accounts describing how Ellington’s orchestra secured the job musically entertaining patrons and accompanying musical revues at the Cotton Club vary. Nevertheless, Ellington’s group, now known as Duke Ellington and his Cotton Club Orchestra, began its residency at the Cotton Club in December 1927. The most significant component Ellington’s Cotton Club experience, in terms of broadening Ellington’s commercial appeal, was the club’s radio feed allowing the band to broadcast across the air waves. Hasse also recognized that, “Within a short time, the fame of Ellington and his top soloist Bubber Miley was spreading via radio broadcasts from the Cotton Club.”<sup>107</sup> By spring 1929 the “Duke Ellington Orchestra,” as their name was printed in the radio program listings, could be heard four times a week on the American Broadcasting Company’s New York dial setting; twice a week during the dinner hour at

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<sup>106</sup> Hasse, 88-91.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, 111-112.

6:30pm and twice more at nights at either 11:00pm or 11:30pm.<sup>108</sup> Ellington's celebrated front line of soloists had strengthened as well with the addition of saxophone virtuoso Johnny Hodges in 1928.

The commercial success the Ellington orchestra had achieved likely made Ellington an attractive and sought after addition to the NAACP benefit show that the Women's Auxiliary was beginning to plan during the first week of November 1929. The Women's Auxiliary to the NAACP national office was officially organized in May 1924. The new unit had previously existed in an informal capacity as the "Committee of One Hundred." The Women's Auxiliary comprised of 170 women, primarily the wives of male NAACP members, from the New York City metropolitan area and was under the leadership of Mrs. Rose McClendon during its first years of formal operation. The auxiliary's primary function, beyond providing a forum for women to express their opinions regarding NAACP activities, was to coordinate entertainment for events produced by the organization's National Office. Mrs. Ida E. Hinton, Chairman of the auxiliary's entertainment committee, and Mrs. Binga Dismond, Publicity Chairman, played major roles in planning and executing the auxiliary's events.<sup>109</sup>

Fundraising for the national office was another vital service the women's auxiliary provided. The auxiliary's semi-annual fundraisers offered local NAACP members and the public an opportunity to attend card parties, dances, and participate in a baby contest. Between 1924 and 1929, the year of the benefit concert featuring Ellington and his Orchestra, the fundraising activities of the auxiliary grossed approximately \$14,000 dollars in revenue, which translated into over \$8,500 dollars profit for the coffers of the

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<sup>108</sup> Richard Baltimore, "Radio News and Programs," *New York Amsterdam News*, 27 March 1929, pg.10

<sup>109</sup> Part I: I:G138, Records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.



National Office, once expenses had been deducted. Nearly \$3,300 of the latter sum was generated in the auxiliary's first year of formal operation alone.<sup>110</sup>

Prior to the 1929 benefit concert the auxiliary's most profitable event was their Spring 1925 dance held at the relatively new Manhattan Casino, located in Harlem on 155<sup>th</sup> street and Eighth avenue. Fletcher Henderson's Roseland Ballroom Orchestra and Rainbow Band provided the dance music and entertainment for patrons with a dollar to spare. Technically speaking, from the vantage point of contemporary musicological interpretation, the Auxiliary's reliance on Henderson's orchestra to provide the entertainment for their fundraising dance marked the first time jazz music was politically mobilized to support African American activism based upon its commercial appeal. Though, how jazz-like the music Henderson's orchestra was actually perceived to be is questionable. In 1924 Henderson's orchestra was hired as the house band for the Roseland Ballroom, an association mentioned in the auxiliary's advertisement of their 1925 dance, "for not playing jazz." The Roseland Ballroom's job announcement for the position that Henderson's group filled stated, "Jazz bands will not be considered."<sup>111</sup>

For the managers of the Roseland Ballroom, and the planning committee of the auxiliary's 1925 dance, Henderson's music fell on the right side of the highly racialized "sweet" versus "hot" jazz divide within the world of jazz. "Sweet" jazz, in the minds and ears listeners and critics during the 1920s, was the smooth, languid, orchestral, white musical interpretation of the wild, uncontrolled, improvised, morally corrupt, gut-bucket sounding "hot" jazz created by black orchestras. The sweet jazz created by white bands

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<sup>110</sup> Part I: I:G138, Records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>111</sup> Jeffery Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing: Fletcher Henderson and Big Band Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 27.

like Paul Whiteman's was considered highly respectable compared to the "hot" style that was Ellington's auditory trademark. Henderson's association with the "sweet" side of the racialized distinction was acknowledged in the African American press, suggesting that Henderson's orchestra was, "the greatest, not at all like the average Negro orchestra, but in a class with the good white orchestras."<sup>112</sup>

Nor did Henderson stray too far from his classical training at Atlanta University during his tenure leading a first class African American dance orchestra. The members of his orchestra read their parts, highly nuanced with notations dictating specific musical dynamics, as opposed to playing by ear. Even the formidable Louis Armstrong, who built a reputation playing the hottest improvised jazz with Joe Oliver in Chicago, was restrained, and conformed to Henderson's style after joining Henderson's orchestra in October 1924. Armstrong stayed with Henderson's band through the end of 1925 and in all likelihood performed with Henderson at the Auxiliary's March 1925 dance.

Armstrong recollected that at some point into his tenure with Henderson he finally decided to "cut loose" and let his powerful sound and improvisational virtuosity fly out and heat-up the bandstand. One can only speculate as to what the patron's of the auxiliary's dance actually heard the night of March 27<sup>th</sup> at the Manhattan Casino.<sup>113</sup>

Henderson's orchestra and their "sweet" style would have been considered appropriate for an NAACP sponsored function. It conformed to the musical tastes of the intellectual leadership of the acculturationist wing of the struggle. Henderson had been vetted in the eyes of the NAACP's executive leadership, largely through his ties to Du

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<sup>112</sup> As quoted in Laurence Bergreen, *Louis Armstrong: An Extravagant Life* (New York: Broadway Books, 1997), 243.

<sup>113</sup> Louis Armstrong, *Louis Armstrong: In His Own Words*, ed. Thomas Brothers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 93.

Bois and others as a result of his participation in the Black Swan venture. The leaders of the acculturationist intelligencia, including Du Bois, Locke, and James Weldon Johnson were among the 4,000 patrons reportedly in attendance. Fletcher Henderson helped the Auxiliary net over \$1,680 dollars in profit to financially support the activities of the National Office.<sup>114</sup>

What made the 1929 Ellington benefit show a historically significant turning point in the relationship between black political activism and commercially successful jazz was that the NAACP was mobilizing “hot” jazz for the first time. The Auxiliary’s decision to incorporate a jazz style defined by its blackness signaled the beginning of a reversal in the Black Liberation Struggle’s view of hot jazz. Their decision openly ignored the prevailing negative views regarding the aesthetic and social value of hot jazz music. The Auxiliary’s choice to include hot jazz in the show’s program was based on common sense economics. Ellington’s commercial appeal had arguably surpassed Henderson’s over the course of four years. The Ellington Orchestra was recognized as the leading black jazz orchestra by the end of 1929, making his group a magnetic attraction for potential patrons.

The NAACP National Office was heavily depending upon the economic success of the Auxiliary’s December 1929 Benefit Show. The show itself was an eleventh hour response to a significant short fall in the \$200,000 dollar revenue goal the headquarters set for the 1929 fiscal year. The ambitious goal was set in commemoration of the organization’s twentieth anniversary. The National Office had only managed to raise \$26,218 dollars, approximately 13% of their goal, by mid October. A little over \$1,700

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<sup>114</sup> Part I: I:G138, Records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; based on the one dollar cost of admissions and the profit of \$1,680 it is likely that the actual attendance was somewhere between two and three thousand patrons.

dollars of which came from the Auxiliary's spring dance. Robert Bagnall, the NAACP's Director of Branches and liaison to the Auxiliary, wrote to Mrs. Inez Richardson-Wilson, the current President of the Auxiliary, asking for assistance in closing the fundraising gap. Bagnall wrote to Richardson-Wilson that, "We are appealing to our Women's auxiliaries for help. The auxiliary can give us aid by arranging some large entertainment before Thanksgiving day and sending the proceeds to the National Office. The form of entertainment can best be determined by the Auxiliary." Richardson-Wilson quickly answered Bagnall and the office's call by organizing a Sunday tea meeting at the Harlem residence of an auxiliary member gracious enough to host. Richardson-Wilson, some sixty Auxiliary members, and Walter White discussed entertainment options over tea November 10<sup>th</sup>. The auxiliary was given a great deal of latitude in selecting the specific types of entertainment for the benefit they were organizing. The opportunity to inject hot jazz into the benefit's program may have been related to the economic strain the NAACP faced. The very recent three-day market crash in late October likely intensified the NAACP leaderships' concerns regarding their ability to raise funds. White may have been willing to agree to anything that could potentially generate revenue, even if some within the organization's leadership may have viewed those entertainment options as culturally risky. The acculturationist intelligencia was actively trying to influence the Auxiliary's cultural programming. Du Bois himself attempted to persuade the Auxiliary to stage a benefit recital for two African American classical musicians. Ellington's hot jazz and African American theatrics from the popular stage were still at odds with what Du Bois and other intellectuals regarded as politically productive modes of cultural production.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Part I: I:C147, Records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Manuscript

Richardson-Wilson and the Auxiliary organized the 1929 benefit concert impressively on short notice. The show was scheduled for the evening of December 8<sup>th</sup>, barely four weeks after their initial planning meeting. The planning committee, which Richardson-Wilson led, arranged for the use of the Forrest Theater, located in midtown Manhattan on 49<sup>th</sup> street, as the benefit's venue. The show was scheduled to run from 8:30pm until midnight. The primary method for ticket distribution for the Forrest theater's 1,200 seat capacity was through the Auxiliary members' personal ties. Tickets were additionally sold at the NAACP National Office on 5<sup>th</sup> street. Ticket prices ranged between a dollar and a half for balcony seats and five dollars for box or orchestra seating. The week before the concert Walter White reached out to the auxiliary members encouraging them to do their best selling the remaining tickets. White, in a December 2<sup>nd</sup> memo to the auxiliary membership wrote, "Will you regard this as a personal appeal that we all re-double our efforts to make the benefit concert on Sunday night at the Forrest Theatre an overwhelming success", and "Let's use the telephone, personal visits, and every other means to see that every seat in the house is sold long before Sunday." The benefit show's program combined jazz and popular entertainment with the pre-approved artistic creativity of the Harlem Renaissance. Visual artist Aaron Douglas designed the program and contributed drawings along with Miguel Covarrubias. The program was also filled with the poetry and prose of Langston Hughes, Rudolph Fisher, Nella Larsen, and Jessie Fauset.<sup>116</sup>

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Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>116</sup> Part I: I:G138, Records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; "Broadway Headliners Volunteer for N.A.A.C.P. Benefit Show," *New York Amsterdam News*, 20 November 1929, 5; "Display Ad 35 – No Title," *New York Amsterdam News*, 4 December 1929, 9.

While Ellington shared the stage with twenty-nine other acts, including one other jazz orchestra lead by Fess Williams, his performance dominated the event. Ellington performed for approximately thirty minutes of a three and a half hour show; a considerable amount of time considering the number of acts scheduled to appear. Ellington's performance likely aroused the curiosity of the benefit show's audience, especially the African Americans in attendance. A portion of the Cotton Club revue theatrical ensemble accompanied the Ellington Orchestra's performance, giving the audience a sample of what the Cotton Club's patrons saw on a nightly basis. The benefit concert gave African Americans a rare opportunity to examine a part of a Cotton Club revue that they otherwise would not have seen as a result of the Cotton Club's well known Jim Crow admissions policy.<sup>117</sup>

The benefit concert was a success. Despite being sandwiched between a frightening financial meltdown and the largest gift giving holiday on the calendar the benefit concert drew total revenue of \$3,378. The benefit concert was the most lucrative event the auxiliary had staged yet; Ellington's hot jazz and popular theater played a large role in its financial success. A *New York Amsterdam News* reviewer reported that, "A mixed audience packed the balcony and mezzanine of the theatre." The show's stellar drawing card even managed to draw the attendance of New York State Lieutenant Governor Herbert H. Lehman. The reviewer also observed, however, the sizable number of vacancies in the box and orchestra seating. Apparently the \$5.00 premium for those seats was a little beyond the pocket books of New Yorkers beginning to brace themselves

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<sup>117</sup> "N.A.A.C.P. Sponsors First Sunday Night Benefit at Downtown Theatre," *New York Amsterdam News*, 11 December 1929, 5.

for the economic disaster ahead.<sup>118</sup> Despite not selling many of the most expensive seats in the theatre the executive leadership was very appreciative of the auxiliary's work. The executive board passed a "Resolution of Gratitude" during their December meeting to thank the auxiliary's membership.

The success of the December 1929 benefit concert placed the Women's Auxiliary on the radar of New York City's white press. In spring 1930 a reporter with the *New York Evening Post* contacted Richardson-Wilson for an interview concerning the activities of the Women's Auxiliary and their significance in reaching the NAACP's goals. Richardson-Wilson enlisted the assistance of Herbert Seligmann, the National Office's Director of Publicity, in preparation for her interview. Seligmann drafted a series of statements and responses for Richardson-Wilson, which he sent in a letter before the scheduled interview date. As a part of those pre-prepared statements for Richardson-Wilson, Seligmann wrote,

But aside from such major political activities in which women participate (referring to the defeat of Parker's confirmation), there are many others which the association leaves entirely to women. In New York City, the Women's Auxiliary of which I am chairman, has undertaken a series of entertainments that are unique in the United States. The women have felt that one way of bringing about more intelligent and orderly race relations, was to enable people of different races to get to know one another. We felt that no better way could possibly be devised for such meetings than the most charming possible entertainments, giving all the guests a pleasant and a memorable evening, and enabling them to meet simply as human beings.<sup>119</sup>

In addition to identifying a critical area of NAACP operations over which women held domain, Seligmann's statement, and Richardson-Wilson's use of that statement, suggested that hot jazz and popular African American entertainment were being directly incorporated into the NAACP's strategic use of cultural production to instigate changes in race relations. Hot jazz music's political value was quickly appreciating beyond its

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<sup>118</sup>cN.A.A.C.P. Sponsors First Sunday Night Benefit at Downtown Theatre," 5.

<sup>119</sup> Part I: I:C147, Records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

supplemental use as a fundraising resource. Not only had the women's auxiliary pushed the limits on the NAACP's views of hot jazz generally, but they placed the musical style, still viewed by many as a pathway to moral corruption, along side of spirituals and classical music produced by African Americans as a mechanism for exposing white Americans to the humanity of their African American counterparts. Ironically, it was hot jazz's commercialism that was the primary factor instigating this major change in the NAACP's strategy regarding cultural production. Jazz music's wide commercial appeal was used to argue against its political usage initially, now the music's commercial appeal paved the way, albeit somewhat roundabout, for its entrance into that strategy.

The NAACP attempted to transform the success of the 1929 inaugural benefit concert into an annual tradition. Walter White personally helped organize the auxiliary's November 16<sup>th</sup> planning session for the 1930 benefit concert, scheduled for the evening Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>. The venue shifted to the Waldorf Theatre located in midtown Manhattan on 50<sup>th</sup> street between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> avenues. Ellington and his orchestra were one of headlining acts scheduled in the show. The auxiliary stepped up their advertisement and publicity efforts for the 1930 benefit. They printed over 3,000 advertising announcements to circulate throughout the city and beyond. Despite another impressive drawing card the show failed to replicate the financial success of the 1929 show, generating \$669 dollars in profits, barely a third of what the 1929 show produced. It is not surprising that concert only managed to produce minimal returns given that it was scheduled at the end of the first year of the depression. The December 1929 show marked the apex of the auxiliary's fundraising success. Every event after the December 1929 show returned fewer profits the deeper into the depression they were scheduled.



The women's auxiliary's second annual benefit concert seemed to be their last for the moment.<sup>120</sup>

The women's auxiliary did decide to continue their annual fundraising dance tradition. Similar to the benefit shows the dances held during the early years of the depression were far less profitable than those scheduled before. The spring 1930 dance raised \$863 dollars while the spring 1931 dance raised only \$557 dollars. Like the benefit concerts the profits from the annual dances peaked in 1929, raising an impressive \$1,768 dollars for the National Office. Profits steadily declined from that point. Both dances featured hot jazz music, but they relied on locally known jazz orchestras, like Russell Wooding's Grand Central Red Cap Orchestra, to provide the music.

The Women's Auxiliary made two changes in the 1932 dance program from earlier years to boost returns. First, they introduced the "Miss Olympic" contest, which allowed black Manhattan's finest women, including Ellington's sister Ruth, to compete with one another for a grand prize trip to Los Angeles to see the upcoming summer Olympic Games. The women's auxiliary themed the affair, scheduled for April 14<sup>th</sup> at Harlem's Rockland Palace, "A Night in California." Second, the auxiliary secured the services of the Duke Ellington Orchestra to lead the dancing portion of the evening's entertainment. The NAACP was again trying to capitalize on the commercial power of an Ellington drawing card as opposed to solely relying on locally established talent. Ellington's group was without question the most renowned African American jazz ensemble in the world. His ability to draw an audience was intensified by the fact that

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<sup>120</sup> Part I: I:C147, Records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

since leaving the Cotton Club in late 1931 he had not appeared in Harlem. Harlemites would have been anxious to see and dance to the Ellington Orchestra's music live.<sup>121</sup>

While two other orchestras were slated to perform at the auxiliary's spring 1932 dance, the success of the event hinged upon the Ellington Orchestra's participation. Ellington's involvement was so important that the auxiliary postponed the contest and dance to give Ellington an opportunity to participate. The initial April 14<sup>th</sup> date conflicted with an engagement that the Ellington Orchestra held at the Paramount Theater in downtown Manhattan. Ellington's contractual arrangement with the Paramount's management gave the venue exclusive rights to the orchestra's live performances. The band could not perform for any outside engagements, including benefits. The auxiliary rescheduled the dance for the evening of Thursday, April 21<sup>st</sup>.<sup>122</sup>

The NAACP learned a valuable lesson regarding the challenges involved with mobilizing commercially appealing jazz as a political resource in the minutes before the rescheduled dance was to begin. An eleventh hour conflict between the NAACP and Irvin Mills resulted in the Ellington Orchestra being pulled from the performance. Money was at the heart of the dispute. According to James E. Allen, President of the NAACP New York City Branch, and its Secretary, William C. Anderson, Mills surprised the NAACP with a demand for a \$1,000 check upon the orchestra's arrival at the Rockland Palace, shortly before Ellington was slated to perform. Mills insisted that the civil rights organization write a thousand dollar check to Frank Shiffman, the manager of Harlem's Lafayette Theater. In Mills' mind the NAACP's check to Shiffman would serve as a form of compensation. Mills had contracted to Shiffman the first opportunity

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<sup>121</sup> "Movie Actress Joins Contest," *New York Amsterdam News*, 16 March 1932, 1S:11; "End of N.A.A.C.P. Contest Nearing," *New York Amsterdam News*, 20 April 1932, 11.

<sup>122</sup> "Postpones Dance of N.A.A.C.P. Unit Here," *New York Amsterdam News*, 13 April 1932, 11.

to present the Ellington Orchestra in Harlem upon the band's return from its west coast tour. Shiffman then scheduled Ellington for a week engagement beginning May 7<sup>th</sup>. Ellington's participation in the NAACP dance, initially scheduled three weeks prior to Shiffman's Lafayette booking, would cause Mills to breach his contract with Shiffman. According to Allen and Anderson, a new arrangement had been negotiated between Mills, Shiffman, and the NAACP prior to the dance to resolve the dilemma. The NAACP allowed Shiffman to display a large place card advertising Ellington's upcoming Lafayette booking upon the Rockland Palace's bandstand in exchange for giving the NAACP consent to be the first to present Ellington in Harlem. Mills' last minute demands, on Shiffman's behalf, were an attempt to change the terms of the agreement; terms the NAACP was not willing to meet. In the end the civil rights organization contemplated taking both Mills and Shiffman to court. The patrons of their "A Night In California" event danced to the jazz of Ralph Cooper and his Kongo Knights and John C. Smith and his Harlem Syncopators, the other two acts on the billing. The Ellington brand name, however, successfully performed the political work that the NAACP desired, despite the fact that the Ellington Orchestra was pulled from performing. Ellington's billing drew over 4,000 patrons to the Rockland Palace.<sup>123</sup>

Mills' check demand was not motivated by a desire for a share of the NAACP benefit revenue. Mills had in fact promised Allen and Anderson that Shiffman would return the thousand dollars to the NAACP during the week of Ellington's Lafayette engagement. Mills claimed that Shiffman planned to use one night of the engagement as a benefit show in support of the NAACP. Shiffman intended to use this occasion to return the NAACP's money, though under the guise of making a "donation" to the civil

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<sup>123</sup> "Duke Ellington's Band Fails Crowd," *New York Amsterdam News*, 27 April 1932, 3.

rights organization. Shiffman was less interested in the NAACP's money than he was the potential boost in ticket sales that benefit shows drew. Advertising an event as a "benefit show" was clever marketing in the context of a deepening depression. Would-be patrons could kill two birds with one stone; they could contribute to an important cause while being pleasantly entertained for the same price. Shiffman's thousand dollar donation would legitimize the event.<sup>124</sup>

The benefit that Shiffman eventually held at the Lafayette Theater, now on behalf of the Urban League as a result of the conflict with the NAACP, was held Friday, May 13<sup>th</sup>. Cab Calloway, another major African American jazz outfit managed by Mills, joined the Ellington Orchestra in providing entertainment. The show drew a packed house. The Lafayette's benefit show was sadly atypical compared to past benefit shows. None of the revenue generated from ticket sales from Friday night's show actually went to the Urban League. Contributions to the Urban League were solely based on voluntary audience donations; Ellington and Mills started the ball rolling with a \$500 dollar offering. Patrons attending the Lafayette's benefit show had to reach back into their billfolds and pocketbooks after paying the cost of admission to aid the Urban League. Henri De La Tour, an entertainment writer for the *New York Amsterdam News* criticized the Lafayette's benefit as a farce. De La Tour wrote, "Why they insist upon calling Friday's (midnight) performance at the Lafayette Theatre a benefit is something beyond me, for midnight benefit shows...constitute an occasion when the theatre and everything connected for the night, and that all moneys accruing are turned over to the organization after their own expenses are deducted."<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> "Duke Ellington's Band Fails Crowd," *New York Amsterdam News*, 27 April 1932, 3.

<sup>125</sup> Henri De La Tour, "Many Out to Special Show," *New York Amsterdam News*, 18 May 1932, 7.

Mills' decision to pull the Ellington Orchestra from performing greatly strained the relationship between the two men. The situation caused Ellington a great deal of embarrassment, especially considering that his sister Ruth participated in and won the "Miss Olympic" contest. A *New York Amsterdam News* article reporting on the conflict between the NAACP and Mills headline read, "Duke Ellington's Band Fails Crowd." The headline must have been upsetting to Ellington, whose performance work ethic revolved around connecting with his audiences. According to band member Sonny Greer Ellington consulted an attorney to see if he could get out of his contract with Mills. Mills' decision to pull the Ellington Orchestra also temporarily severed Ellington's fundraising relationship with the NAACP. Interestingly, Ellington resumed headlining for NAACP benefit shows in the late 1930s, when Ellington was increasingly gaining autonomy and control over the business and management decisions of his band. In May 1939 Ellington ended his business relationship with Irving Mills. Jazz historians and Ellington biographers agree that Ellington and Mills parted on amicable terms. Barry Ulanov, whose early biography of Ellington was published not long after the Ellington/Mills split, suggested that Ellington, in the end, likely left Mills Management due to the lack of attention the Ellington Orchestra had received from Mills in recent years. Mills Management had grown considerably since he had signed Ellington in 1926 and Mills now had other acts requiring his focus. The end of Ellington's business relationship with Mills likely played a role in re-kindling his relationship with the NAACP in the late 1930s.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> A.H. Lawrence, *Duke Ellington and his World: A Biography* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 180; According to a newspaper clipping, actual source unknown and believed to be dated 1946, in the Ellington scrapbook, Ellington began an annual tradition performing for an NAACP benefit at New York's

The NAACP was not the only liberation struggle organization to mobilize commercially successful hot jazz music as a political resource during the 1930s. The American Communist Party (CPUSA) and its derivative organizations, most notably the American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC), tactically turned to jazz as a means of expanding the black demographics of its rank and file membership. Historian Jonathan Bakan has noted that, “Indeed, the Communist Party provided important media space, performance venues, organization networks, and economic backing for a wide range of cultural events that were important in conditioning the history and reception of jazz.”<sup>127</sup> The American Communist Party was formally organized in 1919 by the expelled radical left wing of the Socialist Party. Despite having absorbed the ABB in 1921, the Communist Party was slow to attract working class blacks as a result of the racial prejudices of its white members and the party’s official race-blind position on the organization of capitalist society. The party’s perspective on the hegemony of capitalist oppression privileged class-based struggle and minimized the significance of race as a dividing line between society’s haves and have-nots. Competing perspective regarding the legitimacy of race as a distinct form of capitalist oppression initially split the party into competing factions; the Communist Party of America and the Communist Labor Party.<sup>128</sup>

In 1925, however, the Communist Party began to change its philosophical understanding of the relationship between race and class and began to acknowledge that racial discrimination was a unique element of the marginalization of the working class

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Metropolitan Opera House between 1938-1946, Duke Ellington Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; Ulanov, *Duke Ellington*, 207.

<sup>127</sup> Jonathan Bakan, “Jazz and the Popular Front: Swing Musicians and Left Wing Movements of the 1930s and 1940s,” *Jazz Perspectives* 3, no. 1 (April 2009), 35-56, 37.

<sup>128</sup> Solomon, 17-18.

within capitalist systems. Important changes in the party's structural approach to socio-political labor activism accompanied their shifting philosophical views regarding race and capitalism. Communist International, under the direction of Soviet party leaders established a permanent Negro Commission in 1925. The commission was tasked with mapping a strategy for intensifying CPUSA's efforts in bringing black workers into the communist struggle for workers rights. The new Negro Commission oversaw the organization of the Harlem-based American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC). The ANLC provided CPUSA with the organizational framework to begin to bring African-Americans into the communist labor struggle through the formation of all-black unions. The creation of all-black unions was a significant reversal in the party's race-blind vision of union membership. The ANLC provided the party with the ability to build interracial solidarity between unions where they had previously failed to create that same solidarity within unions. The ANLC also provided the party with a mechanism of addressing the unique social issues related to the racial oppression of black Americans. The communist subsidiary's socio-political agenda included fighting for equal citizenship and voting rights for African American, ending discriminatory practices within the workplace, and securing the extension of needed public services into African American communities, and ending lynching. The ANLC also served as a valuable gateway to employment opportunities for African American's in the urban north, especially in Harlem and Chicago.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity*, 46-49; Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 11-12; Michael Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 183-184, 190-191; Rod Bush, *We Are Not What We Seem* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 114.

Similar to the NAACP, the ANLC first put hot jazz to political work in the context of an ANLC organized and sponsored variety show and dance. Harlem's popular Renaissance Casino, located at 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 138<sup>th</sup> Street, served as the venue for the ANLC's first event. The "Harlem Revels Solidarity Demonstration Dance," as the event was billed, included a short gala program featuring theatrical revue style entertainment and a dance. Vernon Andrade's ten-piece orchestra provided the dance music for the affair. Andrade's group was the longtime house band of the Renaissance Casino and had a respectable, yet local, reputation. Andrade's orchestra's music played a prominent role in the ANLC's ability to sell the event to their membership and the Harlem public at large. The event's advertising flyer, published in the *New York Amsterdam News*, declared that patrons would hear "Red Hot Jazz by Famous Vernon Andrade Renaissance Orchestra," and the event's press release heralded that "The justly famous Vernon Andrade Renaissance Orchestra of ten pieces will broadcast the weirdest jazz Harlem can turn out." The ANLC organizers of the "Harlem Revels" regarded hot jazz as a vital component in drawing an audience and producing a successful event.<sup>130</sup>

While the ANLC and NAACP both politically used hot jazz within the same structural context, the variety show and dance, there were key differences in the execution and political objectives of each organization's use of the music within that framework. There was a considerable difference in the price of admissions to each event. The cost of admission to the NAACP show ranged between \$1.50 and \$5.00 dollars, a significant premium, as much at 500%, to the flat \$1.00 dollar entry fee charged by the ANLC. The disparity in ticket prices, aside from reinforcing the socio-economic class

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<sup>130</sup> "Display Ad 30," *New York Amsterdam News*, 9 January 29, 7; "Labor Congress in 'Classic Night,'" *New York Amsterdam News*, 2 January 1929, 7.



differences between the middle class and working class based organizations, was rooted in the different goals the NAACP and ANLC had for their respective event. The NAACP's affair was a "benefit concert." The strategic goal of the event was to simply raise money for the NAACP. Using an increasing price scale for better seating made sense in this instance, it created the greatest potential for maximizing profits. The strategic goal of the ANLC's event, alternatively, was to build solidarity among black and white workers. The ANLC event's press release emphasized that whites, in the spirit of interracial cooperative activism, would be in attendance. The press release stated, "And [the white unionists] are coming to fraternize, to dance and be merry and show their solidarity with the Negro masses, not to sit apart and dissect the Negro, while fooling themselves with pseudo-scientific nonsense about the races. That kind of whites have not been invited and frankly not wanted."<sup>131</sup> Total volume of attendance was the factor determining the ultimate success of the "Harlem Revels" event, the larger the number of patrons the event drew the stronger the statement of interracial solidarity would be. The relatively low ticket price was instrumental in helping to ensure a sizable turnout.

The ANLC's first "Harlem Revels" gala and dance was held January 22, 1929, nearly eleven months before the NAACP's December 1929 benefit concert featuring Duke Ellington's hot jazz. Technically, the ANLC was ahead of the curve in putting the socially questionable musical style to political use. However, the hot jazz they used, Andrade's Renaissance house orchestra, lacked the commercial prowess that Ellington's Orchestra offered. Andrade's orchestra, capable of producing fantastic jazz, came with the venue. His comparatively smaller commercial presence limited the potential political value that hot jazz could offer the ANLC. The ANLC's second "Harlem Revels" dance,

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<sup>131</sup> "Labor Congress in 'Classic Night,'" 7.

held Saturday, March 22, 1930 at Harlem's Rockland Palace, followed the NAACP's lead. Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, as the aristocrat of jazz was billed, provided the entertainment and music for the event.

The ANLC's March 1930 "Harlem Revels" event was co-sponsored by the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL), another one of CPUSA's subsidiaries. The TUUL was a relatively new organization within CPUSA. It had been organized in Cleveland in August 1929. The organization grew out of Communist International's Third Period directives to CPUSA to begin to organize autonomous and "openly-communist-led" trade unions. Prior to the Third Period directive shift CPUSA leaders had focus on building support for the party within existing union frameworks, primarily the American Federation of Labor (AFL). The shift to organizing independent, communist-based unions, it was believed, would give CPUSA a better opportunity to make headway in building support among African Americans, Women, and other unskilled industrial laborers. The racism of the federation's rank and file membership proved a too formidable barrier for CPUSA to accomplish these goals by working within the AFL. The TUUL primarily concentrated on organizing workers within major industries including mining, textiles, steel and automotive. In early 1930 the TUUL directed its energy farther south attempting to organize industrial workers in places like Alabama, Kentucky, and West Virginia.<sup>132</sup>

The TUUL established a "Negro Department" during its inaugural convention to specifically focus on organizing African American workers. The 1929 Cleveland conference did draw a meaningful number of African American participants. Co-

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<sup>132</sup> Edward P. Johanningsmeier, "The Trade Union Unity League: American Communists and the Transition to Industrial Unionism, 1928-1934," *Labor History* 42, No. 2 (2001), 159-162, 173; Solomon, xxiv.

sponsoring the second “Harlem Revels” dance with the ANLC offered the TUUL a valuable opportunity to spread awareness of its existence in African American communities where the party already had an established presence. New York’s black press reported a large demand for tickets during the weeks leading to the big event. Duke Ellington’s orchestra, the sole act billed to provide entertainment, was without doubt behind Harlem’s swelling interest in attending. Again, the dance provided African Americans with a rare opportunity to see Ellington live. Ellington’s performance time during this period was dominated by his engagement as the Cotton Club’s house band, a venue that Jim Crowed the black public out of seeing and hearing the Ellington Orchestra on a regular basis. The low \$0.75 advance purchase ticket price also did its share to fuel interest.<sup>133</sup>

The power of Duke Ellington’s drawing card again provided CPUSA, through the combined efforts of the ANLC and TUUL, an occasion to foster interracial solidarity between black and white workers. In many ways the solidarity ball represented one of CPUSA’s efforts to win the trust and support of the black community. The ball gave CPUSA the opportunity to assemble the black working class in a relaxed environment where party leaders could explain CPUSA’s serious commitment towards helping black Americans fight against social and political injustice and economic exploitation. Despite the party’s evolved understanding of the nature of racial oppression within a capitalist America, many blacks remained suspicious of the party’s white leadership based on the past racist views of party members. The press releases and black press coverage of the dance went out of their way to emphasize the affinity the TUUL’s white membership felt

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<sup>133</sup> Johanningsmeier, “The Trade Union Unity League,” 173-174; “Display Ad 44,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 12 March 1930, 9.

for the plight of their African American counterparts. Readers of Harlem's African American press were told that hundreds of downtown Manhattan's white workers were coming to the Rockland Palace to "express their solidarity with the Negro workers their repudiation of the imperialist ideology of racial hate by which employers seek to split and weaken the working class," and that "some of them [TUUL's white members] have been to the South, where they boldly raised the slogan of race equality and carried on a successful campaign, in the face of the most vicious terrorism and attempts to lynch them, to win the southern white workers away from the race hatred propaganda of the white ruling class."<sup>134</sup> If the press coverage failed to establish the credibility of the TUUL's credentials in the struggle against oppression, Ellington's presence was the ANLC and TUUL's figurative ace. His music was magnetic enough to bait Harlemites to the Rockland Palace, where full exposure to the party's ideology and goals would hopefully hook them into membership.

The "Second Annual Harlem Revels Solidarity Ball" was also the last. The ANLC officially dissolved in late 1930. The organization ultimately failed to recruit African American party members in significant numbers. The "Harlem Revels" dances may have been the ANLC's last strategic effort to build its black membership base. While its two dances were considered successful in terms of the size of the African American audience they each drew, they failed to capitalize on the opportunity Ellington's drawing card provided. The TUUL dissolved in 1934. As with the ANLC, its efforts to recruit African Americans did not prove successful. The TUUL's philosophy of racial solidarity could not be reconciled with the racist ideology ingrained within the consciousnesses of the white workers it recruited. The ANLC sponsored

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<sup>134</sup> "Henderson and Band Ready," *New York Amsterdam News*, 19 March 1930, 8.

Harlem Revels dance classics did shed light on some of the party's successful tactics for reaching out to potential African American members in the years before the party's defense of the Scottsboro Boys galvanized African American support for CPUSA.<sup>135</sup>

The Communist Party's defense of the Scottsboro boys revived the relationship between the party and the jazz community. The Scottsboro Boys were nine young African American men ranging in age from twenty to twelve, who in 1931 were arrested, tried, and sentenced to death in Alabama based on false accusations of rape made by two white women who were hoboing on the same freight train as the young men. The party's legal organization, International Labor Defense (ILD), came to the aid of the nine young men and helped appeal their Alabama convictions to the United States Supreme Court. Historians have identified the party's defense of the Scottsboro Boys as a major contribution to the party's efforts to gain the support and trust of black Americans. The Communist Party once again mobilized jazz music as a method of generating the financial resources that ILD needed to provide the nine young men legal aid. The party hosted two benefits in May and December 1932 featuring the Duke Ellington, and the Cab Calloway and Benny Carter Orchestras. John Hammond, a well-known African American manager, promoter, and critic within the jazz world also began to help the party reach out to jazz musicians who were willing to support the party advance black rights and social justice.<sup>136</sup>

The implementation of CPUSA's "Popular Front" platform in 1935 proved to be the party's strongest strategic initiative in expanding its presence within the Black Liberation Struggle. The party's new willingness to collaboratively work with

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<sup>135</sup> Bush, 115; Dawson 191; Johanningsmeier, 159, 173-174.

<sup>136</sup> Dawson, 187-188; Bakan, "Jazz and the Popular Front," 40-41.

socio-political organizations across the ideological spectrum towards achieving shared goals, especially preventing the spread of fascism, defined the core of the Popular Front period.<sup>137</sup> While black party membership had peaked at eighty-seven in 1933, by 1935 black party membership had grown to 700. By 1938 the party contained approximately 1,000 black members and an estimated additional 2,000 blacks participating in party affiliated organizations and activities. The party's continued use of jazz music to draw black Americans to party sponsored events and activities likely played a role in helping the party grow its black membership demographic. According to Bakan, "...by the late 1930s, Communist-led organizations were frequently featuring jazz or swing bands at their social functions and benefits," largely as a result of the party's new ideological openness.<sup>138</sup> The initiation of the Popular Front as a strategy of activism did not significantly change the ways which the Communist Party tactically mobilized jazz music. The shift to the Popular Front did, however, increase the frequency with which the party turned to jazz to help accomplish its goals.

Between 1938 and 1940 a number of African American jazz musicians and orchestras, including Chick Webb, James P. Johnson, Count Basie, Fats Waller, Jimmie Lunceford and Cab Calloway joined Ellington in providing the magnetism the party needed to attract black Americans to events hosted by the party and its affiliates. While few jazz musicians became full-fledged political activists within the Popular Front, historian Michael Denning had suggested that musicians, "...recognized the social crises of the depression and fascism, and were attracted to the hopes and energies of the Popular

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<sup>137</sup> Naison, 169; Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1997), 317.

<sup>138</sup> Bakan, 43.

Front social movement.”<sup>139</sup> The Musicians’ Committee for Spanish Democracy was one of the most active CPUSA affiliate organizations politically mobilizing jazz during the Popular Front period. The committee aided the Spanish Republic in its attempt to suppress a fascist-supported military coup, which blossomed into civil war, between 1936 and 1939, by sending the embattled Republic government money. Ellington was a prominent member of the committee. Ellington’s 1941 revue, *Jump for Joy*, according to Denning, was also a significant Popular Front event. Premiering in Los Angeles, the theatrical show satirically challenged the racialized stereotypes that had been used to portray black characters within American theatre.<sup>140</sup>

A. Philip Randolph’s Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters joined the NAACP and CPUSA in politically mobilizing hot jazz music in the mid-1930s. Officially organized in 1925 in the office of Randolph’s *Messenger* the BSCP organized African American railway porters into a strong labor union with the ability to represent fully the needs and interests of black railway service workers employed by the Pullman Company. The BSCP was designed to replace the company led Employee Representation Plan, which only granted black railway service workers marginal concession. Randolph was selected as the labor union’s President. The fact that the editor himself was not an employee of the Pullman Company was an asset. The Pullman Company could not reprimand Randolph for his labor activism and subsequently the company had less influence over the BSCP’s leadership.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Denning, *The Cultural Front*, 333.

<sup>140</sup> Bakan, 44; Denning, 309-318.

<sup>141</sup> Cornelius Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 120-124; Preston Valien, “Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters,” *Phylon* (1940-1956) 1, No. 3 (Third Quarter 1940), 224-238, 227, 228.

The BSCP's mobilization of jazz reflected the NAACP's approach to using the music as a political resource. The labor organization held a midnight benefit show May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1933 in Harlem. Duke Ellington and his Orchestra was the strongest drawing card within a billing of twelve acts, which also included jazz performed by the Vincent Lopez Orchestra. Tickets for the benefit performance, ranging between fifty-five cents and one dollar, were significantly less expensive compared to the admissions costs charged by both the NAACP and CPUSA. The BSCP's event was clearly targeting Harlem's working class. The event was held at Schiffman's Lafayette Theater. Unlike the 1932 Urban League benefit held at the Lafayette Theater the BSCP seemed to actually draw revenue from ticket sales based on the method of ticket distribution. The BSCP directly sold tickets to the public and its membership and collected the fees.<sup>142</sup>

If one indulges the premise that both the editorial content of the *Messenger* and the positions and actions taken by the BSCP, both institutions Randolph controlled, were representations of Randolph's perspectives, then the BSCP's mobilization of hot jazz in the 1930s evidenced a notable reversal in Randolph's views regarding the music. In the early 1920s Randolph's socialist paper was equating jazz music with the capitalist economic system that it railed against. The music was reflective of capitalism's parasitic characteristics; it overwhelmed and ravaged the different styles and genres of music it touched. Jazz was as corrosive to true music as capitalism was to the social organization of humanity. Jazz music's mass popularity and marketplace appeal, evidence of its capitalist spirit, dampened the music's valued. Within the span of ten years however, Randolph's position, vis-à-vis the BSCP, had completely reversed. Jazz music's

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<sup>142</sup> "Brotherhood in Big Benefit," *New York Amsterdam News*, 10 May 1933, 8; "Display Ad 43 – No Title," *New York Amsterdam News*, 17 May 1933, 8.



commercial viability and dominance in the capitalist entertainment marketplace was its greatest asset. The music's ability to draw in the largest possible audience made it a valuable resource in the BSCP's effort to raise financial capital at a critical time. The BSCP's use of jazz based on the music's commercial viability within the capitalist system mirrored Randolph's gravitation towards the mainstream.<sup>143</sup>

Towards the mid-1930s the political use of jazz within the New Negro wave of the Black Liberation Struggle expanded beyond its supplemental role as revenue generating resource. By the middle of the decade acculturationists began touting jazz music and musicians as symbols of racial advancement, in the same way they had viewed blacks performing in European musical traditions during the early Harlem Renaissance in the aftermath of WWI. As with the benefit concerts the NAACP again took the leading role in broadening the scope of the political work jazz performed within the liberation struggle. Duke Ellington, his orchestra, and their music, were again at the center of this shift. Jazz music's dynamic expansion into a celebrated emblem of race progress was largely the result of the Ellington Orchestra's success in gaining praise from Europe's leading music critics. The gears turning critical perception of hot jazz were put in motion in the summer of 1933, when the Ellington organization embarked on a three-month tour of Europe. The overwhelming reception Ellington received abroad rippled through the Eurocentric cultural perspectives of the African American cultural elite and into the pages of the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine. It was in *Crisis* that jazz, by way of a feature profile of Duke Ellington, was transformed into a proud symbol of the limitless potential of black America. The Ellington profile was the first time a formal political organization

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<sup>143</sup> Larry Tye has recently noted that Randolph and the BSCP were perceived as one in the same in the eyes of brotherhood's membership and the public, Larry Tye, *Rising from the Rails: Pullman Porters and the Making of the Black Middle Class* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), 116.

had officially placed jazz within the cultural production strategy defining the political purpose of the early Harlem Renaissance. Structural changes within the NAACP created the opportunity for the political promotion of jazz in this new light. At the beginning of the 1930s the *Crisis* was in severe financial distress. The magazine's circulation dramatically dovetailed as a consequence of the depression's entrenchment. The voice of the acculturationist vanguard had become insolvent. The editorial policy of *Crisis* was re-calibrated as a result of the publication's financial woes, hoping to better relate to the interests of a much wider demographic. Changes in the magazine's editorial policy introduced a new generation of New Negro leadership into the magazine's editorial decision making. This younger generation's perspective on hot jazz, the soundtrack of their coming of age, was introduced to *Crisis* as well.

British bandleader Jack Hylton was the catalyst behind the Ellington Orchestra's tour of the United Kingdom and France during the summer of 1933. Hylton was motivated to bring Ellington, in person, to British audiences so that they could experience first hand, the cutting edge of hot jazz innovation. Hylton arranged performances for the Ellington Orchestra at London's famous Palladium Theatre, a forty-five minute music broadcast over the British Broadcasting Company's national network of airwaves, and a host of other concerts and dances in cities including Liverpool, Birmingham, Blackpool, Glasgow, and Paris. Coordinating with Ellington's manager Irving Mills, Hylton arranged for the Ellington aggregate to set sail aboard the *Olympic* on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1933. This was Ellington's first trip abroad. The band, accompanied by Mills and several of the band members' wives, arrived in Southampton eight days later.

Europe had intensely awaited Ellington's arrival with a great deal of enthusiasm. Tickets for Ellington's performances at the Palladium, scheduled nightly between June 12<sup>th</sup> and June 25<sup>th</sup>, went on sale in mid-May. Within twenty-four hours the four thousand seat venue was sold-out. The British press and Hylton's press agents also fanned the flames of excitement. Cedric Belfrage, in the Manchester *Dispatch* reported, "Ellington, you know, is no ordinary negro jazzist. His advance press agent describes him as well-educated and gentlemanly in his bearing." England's *News-Chronicle* described Ellington as "the most celebrated Negro bandmaster in the world." Ellington's pre-tour hype ensured that he had a very warm reception at his Southampton disembarkation.<sup>144</sup>

Jack Hylton carefully set the tone for Ellington's opening performance at the Palladium the evening of June 12th. The show's program booklet contained a special message from Hylton. Addressing the audience, Hylton wrote, "In many ways, theirs [the Ellington Orchestra's] is the music of the future, and by your support and enthusiasm, the mark they are making on the pages of history is the more indelible." Hylton viewed the compositional style and unique music of Ellington and his orchestra as representative of the vanguard of modern music. For the British jazzman Ellington's musical ideas embodied the next step in the evolution of the western music. Brining Ellington to European audiences was Hylton's way of contributing to the making of cultural history. He hoped that the Palladium's audiences, after experiencing the Ellington Orchestra, would share his sentiment. Spike Hughes, jazz critic for the United Kingdom jazz magazine *Melody Maker*, took the significance of Ellington's musical genius to an even higher degree. Hughes' biographical sketch of Ellington, penned for the concert program booklet, told audiences, "And I fully expect that Duke himself will

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<sup>144</sup> Lawrence, 208; As quoted in Ulanov 131,132.

be surprised to find how famous – and how deservedly famous – he is among musicians and critics, and a million other people who appreciate beauty and originality in music when they find it.” Hughes praised Ellington not only as a bandleader but as a gifted composer. Hughes wrote that, “At least, his worth as a composer is more generally accepted and appreciated in this continent than on the other side of the Atlantic.” Europe was leagues ahead of the United States in its ability to recognize and discern cultural aesthetics in Hughes’ perspective. While a few patrons to chose walk out on Ellington’s performance or toss pennies upon the stage as a statement of their opinion of his music’s value, Ellington’s two week run at the Palladium was a monumental success, as was the remainder of his tour.<sup>145</sup>

Ellington’s Paris performances drew audiences from all over continental Europe including Parisian Hugues Panassie. Panassie, a serious music critic and hot jazz enthusiast, founded Paris’ most reputable jazz magazine, *Le Jazz Hot*, not long after hearing the Ellington Orchestra live. Panassie was also credited for authoring the young music’s first historical account in 1935. Also titled *Le Jazz Hot*, Hugues’ monograph cited Ellington, as both a bandleader and a composer, as hot jazz’s best contemporary example and as a point of departure for the music’s future.<sup>146</sup> Ellington biographer A.H. Lawrence assessed the musicological significance of Ellington’s 1933 tour of the United Kingdom and France when he wrote, “On a professional level,..., Ellington had presented his music to non-Americans who appreciated it and took it seriously to the

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<sup>145</sup> “A Concert of the Music of Duke Ellington,” (Program for Ellington’s Palladium Performances), Duke Ellington Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

<sup>146</sup> Ulanov,

point where it became a matter of public debate. Men of letters in British Musical circles...discussed his work in print.”<sup>147</sup>

In addition to the fact that Ellington’s hot jazz was being discussed as serious music with aesthetic value, African American press coverage of Ellington’s tour must have caught the attention of acculturationist leaders, especially discussion of Ellington’s social interaction with the European public. An article in the *Pittsburgh Courier* headlined, “Duke is Welcomed at Exclusive Savoy Grill in Gay London.” The story described how Ellington was embraced by the management and staff at the Savoy Grill that otherwise denied service to blacks. “Exclusive” was the English gentlemen’s mannered way of saying “Jim Crow”. Ellington’s dining at the Savoy was noteworthy because Paul Robeson, perhaps the most respected African American actor and artist, especially among cultural leaders of the acculturationist front, was barred from dining at the restaurant prior to Ellington’s visit. Alain Locke, James Weldon Johnson, and W.E.B. DuBois, and others likely read or were told about how Ellington’s hot jazz was eroding the social barriers in Europe that they were trying to overcome at home. In addition to reporting the Savoy Grill story The *New York Amsterdam News* reported that Edward, the Prince of Wales, extended his stay in Liverpool for the sole purpose of experiencing an Ellington performance live. Readers of the newspaper learned that Prince Edward led the audience in a round of applause so thunderous that Ellington performed four encores. Not only was Ellington deconstructing social barriers, but was gaining the respect and appreciation of English royalty. Ellington’s tour in Europe seemed to have as large an influence on race relations as it did in adjusting ideas about

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<sup>147</sup> Lawrence, 221.

jazz music's aesthetic merit. The social significance of Ellington's time in Europe was likely not overlooked by integrationist socio-political leaders in Harlem.<sup>148</sup>

The critical praise for Ellington's jazz in Europe as a result of his 1933 tour and French critic Hugues Panassie's 1935 treatise on hot jazz, *Le Jazz Hot*, in which Ellington's significance to the musical style was second to none, demonstrated to a Eurocentric cadre of African American cultural and intellectual leaders that hot jazz had a recognized aesthetic value, one respected in Europe's greatest cosmopolitan cities. Hot jazz had come to the forefront of modern music. African American cultural elites began to lay racial claim to hot jazz as a result. They were motivated by a desire to settle debates regarding black America's ability to contribute to both American and Western culture. Ironically, in arguing that hot jazz was the exclusive property of black America, acculturationists adopted cultural nationalist perspectives as a tactical way of achieving social and political integration. Acculturationists injected new meaning into the racially essentialist linkages between hot jazz and blackness, not as a way to help unify black America with the goal of achieving political independence, but to convince white America and the West that the only way they could claim hot jazz as a symbol of Western musical modernity was if they claimed black Americans, as equals, too. Alain Locke's 1936 *The Negro and His Music* was the strongest example of the cadre of African American acculturationists' tactical adoption of black cultural nationalism in their political mobilization of jazz during this period. Locke, in order to gain African Americans recognition for the rich contribution jazz was making within Western culture, first had to re-center the primacy of black racial identity within the music.

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<sup>148</sup> "Duke is Welcomed at Exclusive Savoy Grill in Gay London," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 July 1933, A3; "Prince Cheers American Duke," *New York Amsterdam News*, 5 July 1933, 7.

Locke's move was somewhat necessary in the wake of Panassie's book. In addition to outlining the primary elements upon which hot jazz music should be evaluated, Panassie's engagement with the subject emphasized its cosmopolitan participation, especially in terms of the racial diversity of musicians making significant contributions to hot jazz's future development. Panassie acknowledged the African American cultural origins of "swing," which he believed to be hot music's most important component. He also argued that white musicians, like Bix Beiderbecke and Muggsy Spanier for instance, were helping to chart hot jazz's future direction. Panassie wrote that white musicians, "...in adopting the Negro style, unconsciously brought to it certain purely musical qualities from their superior culture. This does not mean that they 'civilized' the Negro style, or 'sterilized' it. They eliminated from their playing none of that wild Negro spontaneity; they simply perfected its form."<sup>149</sup> With regard to the discussion of race and jazz Panassie suggested that African American culture created a new musical *form*; one that, like any other genre of music, any musician with sufficient raw talent and discipline could both master and improve upon. While the development of the form was credited to a specific racial group the music was not to be aesthetically judged based upon a musician's ability to express the racial identity of the form's originators. Indeed, most critics' general understanding of jazz recognized the balance between jazz's racial origins and its internationalist appeal. In 1925 J.A. Rogers characterized this balance as a paradox, "too fundamentally human, at least as modern humanity goes, to be typically racial, too internationalist to be characteristically national, too much abroad in the world to have a special home. And yet in spite of it all is one part

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<sup>149</sup> Panassie, 29.

American and three parts American Negro...”<sup>150</sup> Panassie had tilted the balance in favor of the music’s cosmopolitanism, Locke was now swinging jazz back towards its African American cultural origins.

Locke laid claim to jazz by linking jazz music’s critical assessment to the music’s ability to express African American racial identity. The rationale behind this move was that African American musicians would naturally have the advantage charting jazz’s future course. His critical opinion argued that the purest jazz, the music with the highest aesthetic quality, contained the greatest degree of African American racial expression. Blackness became the primary spectrum along which the music’s aesthetic value was determined. Locke wrote, “...jazz and ragtime are distinctly Negro, in fact, the further back one goes the more racial it is found to be” and “But as jazz has spread out from the Mississippi headwaters and become the international ocean it is now it has become more diluted, more cosmopolitan and less racial. It was the early jazz that was the most typically racial – and musically the most powerful.”<sup>151</sup> The further jazz strayed from expressions of blackness it became weaker, watered-down, and less artistically valuable. Locke also asserted that the quality and artistry of jazz was also attributed to jazz musicians’ ability to spontaneously create a rich aural feeling of mood. Locke racialized this skill claiming that “Most of the members of today’s Negro orchestras are highly trained musicians, but more of their pieces are worked out by ear in improvised experiment than are played from set arrangements.”<sup>152</sup>

If Locke was going to now claim jazz as an emblem of the New Negro’s ability to contribute to American and Western civilization he would have to grapple with the

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<sup>150</sup> Rogers, “Jazz at Home,” 216.

<sup>151</sup> Alain Locke, *The Negro and His Music* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 72-73.

<sup>152</sup> Locke, *The Negro and His Music*, 78.



commercial side of the music. Jazz's commercialism and subjectivity to the entertainment marketplace had been one of African American intellectuals' strongest lines of criticism against using the music politically. The negativity associated with jazz music's commercial appeals was a major reason behind its exclusion from playing a part in the early years of the New Negro Renaissance. Jazz's vast popularity was an unavoidable hurdle for Locke in his attempt to critically discuss the very best that jazz had to offer.

A year before *The Negro and His Music* was published Benny Goodman and his big band orchestra ushered in the Swing Era, a period in jazz history characterized by the rise of twelve piece big bands. The style added significance to the importance of solo improvisation, and the incorporation of a swinging rhythmic pulse in which each beat in a four beat measure had equal weight.<sup>153</sup> Goodman did not initiate the musical changes that characterized jazz during this period but his 1935 tours popularized the style in the ears and feet of a dance-crazed white American public. Because of the music's mass popularity, especially in the area of recorded music, critic's voices now had to compete with record sales figures for the privilege of discerning good jazz from bad. The populous of recorded music consumers posed a barrier to the recognition of the critic's authoritative ear. Locke was well aware of this dilemma and directly addressed it suggesting, "The public taste is a notoriously poor judge of quality in this field; jazz experts will insist on reversing many of its preferences. They can never consent to a

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<sup>153</sup> J. Branford Robinson, "Swing (ii)," *Oxford Music Online*, <http://oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/53904>, 12 August 2009.

rating of jazz by the dollar intake, or the bestowals of titles and false claims by high paid publicity agents.”<sup>154</sup>

Locke also had to address the moral stigma, closely tied to the jazz’s commercialism still clinging to the music. Although Prohibition ended in 1933 transforming “many speakeasies into legitimate night clubs,” as Ted Gioia noted, the music in some ways still remained a symbol of American society’s deteriorating values.<sup>155</sup> Locke cleverly posited that jazz was not an impetus for America’s abandonment of its Protestant values but a victim of that abandonment. He argued that music used as an “emotional narcotic” for listeners in honest need of respite and rejuvenation was maliciously perverted into a vehicle for “morbid eroticism” by Americans in search of new methods of dislodging their constricting values. The nature of the entertainment marketplace provided the opportunity for jazz’s exploitation. Locke wrote, “...Negro emotional elements have been seized upon, and jazz had become one of the main channels for emotional exhaust and compensation.”<sup>156</sup> The most popular jazz within the marketplace, and the social functions for which it was used, was Locke’s evidence that jazz had been high-jacked.

Locke rescued jazz from the corrupting effect of its commercialism by defining two categories of jazz deserving of serious music critics’ attention. Locke asserted, “We have to reckon with two types of worthwhile jazz, as distinguished by the trashy variety.”<sup>157</sup> Locke identified the “jazz classic” and “classical jazz.” The former described a category of jazz structured in the style of dance music but was remarkably

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<sup>154</sup> Locke, 83.

<sup>155</sup> Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 136.

<sup>156</sup> Locke, 88.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

unique from ordinary dance music because of its improvisational creativity and aesthetic richness. The latter described a category of jazz structured in the classical form whose value was appraised based on the ability to expand upon the folk idioms characteristically contained within jazz. In a critical analysis that was ultimately looking towards the future of black music, Locke regarded both the jazz classic and classical jazz as representative of “the serious possibilities of Negro music...” and recognized that both “have been vital contributions to the new modernistic music of our time.”<sup>158</sup>

Locke’s chapter on the “jazz classic,” while recognizing the immense talent of innovative soloists like Louis Armstrong, celebrated the creativity of Duke Ellington and the members of his orchestra. According to Locke their music in particular was at the vanguard of the best jazz music emerging out of the dance format. The aesthetic quality of their jazz was second to none in Locke’s mind. He held that, “A popular dance tune performed by the Ellington orchestra should be rated a jazz classic.”<sup>159</sup> There were two factors contributing to Locke’s high regard for Ellington’s jazz; the orchestra’s superior technical musicianship and their ability to play in a “pure” style that was expressive of African American racial identity. Based on those two elements Locke argued that, “...in addition to being one of the greatest exponents of pure jazz, Duke Ellington is the pioneer of super-jazz and one of the persons most likely to create the classical jazz towards which so many are striving.”<sup>160</sup> Ellington’s 1935 composition “Reminiscing in Tempo,” the composer’s first attempt at an extended form composition, must have influenced Locke’s opinion. Locke’s assessment was written and published in a moment when Ellington, as a composer, was consciously attempting to transcend the creativity-constricting

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<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

expectations of the entertainment marketplace by composing serious jazz music.

Ellington's seeming liberation from the market also helped free his music's persona from the negative moral connotations still associated with jazz clearing a path for Locke to claim the music. Locke included a selected list of recordings to illustrate the very best of jazz classics for his readers' benefit. Songs recorded by Ellington and his orchestra were the only one included in Locke's list.<sup>161</sup>

Locke did not rely on his voice alone in his attempt to introduce readers to the aesthetic values of "good" jazz. He strategically enlisted the voices of several of Europe's leading music critics. He relied on two, Hugues Panassie and Constant Lambert, of French and English nationality, respectively, to specifically help establish that Ellington's music was representative of the best music produced in the jazz idiom. Aside from reconfiguring the aesthetic characteristics of jazz that Panassie described to make the expression of race more pronounced, Locke treated Panassie's *Le Hot Jazz*, which had recently been translated into English, as a reference guide. Panassie's book, after offering readers a thorough analysis of jazz and its "hot" variety, read like an annual of the music's best musicians. Only two musicians, Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong, were the focus of entire chapters of *Le Hot Jazz*. Unsurprisingly, Armstrong and Ellington were the two jazz figures specifically recognized by Locke. Locke adopted Panassie's perspective that Ellington was jazz music's greatest composer and led the greatest band and that Armstrong was the music's greatest improviser. Locke also quoted a quite lengthy passage from an article written by Lambert. Locke's readers heard Lambert's voice declare that not only could one listen to Ellington recordings tirelessly but that "Ellington in fact, is a real composer, the first jazz composer of distinction, and

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<sup>161</sup> Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 182.

the first Negro composer of distinction.” Locke’s readers heard Lambert’s voice proclaim that Ellington’s compositional skill placed him on a level comparable with “so-called high-brow composers.”<sup>162</sup>

Both Panassie’s and Lambert’s critical opinions of Ellington’s contribution to jazz music were formed in the wake of the Ellington Orchestra’s 1933 European tour. The tour afforded both critics an opportunity to hear the orchestra live. They were both inspired by hearing and seeing Ellington perform. Ellington and the cadre of talented musicians under his command, with the help of manager Irvin Mills and British band leader Jack Hylton, who together coordinated the tour, achieved, with respect to music, what nearly fifteen years of Harlem Renaissance styled political uses of cultural production had not; the recognition among whites that African Americans could, and were, playing a meaningful role in shaping Western modernity. Locke’s celebration of Ellington, at this particular moment, was recognition of this fact.

Locke’s opinion that Ellington, and Armstrong, were the greatest contributors to “worthwhile” jazz, and that within Ellington’s creativity was the path of jazz’s future was a stunning reversal in regard to the African American intellectual elite’s perspective on the music’s future. Nearly a decade had passed since J.A. Rogers wrote, at the height of the Harlem Renaissance that, “Musically jazz has a great future...in the more famous jazz orchestras like those of Will Marion Cool, Paul Whiteman, Sissle and Blake, Sam Stewart, Fletcher Henderson, Vincent Lopez, and the Clef Club units, there are none of the vulgarities and crudities of the lowly origin.”<sup>163</sup> In other words, Rogers located the future of jazz within the continued development of “sweet jazz,” the refined, polished,

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<sup>162</sup> Constant Lambert as quoted in Locke, 99.

<sup>163</sup> Rogers, “Jazz at Home,” 221

smoothed, sanitized version of jazz crafted for the consumption of respectable listeners. The music the Ellington orchestra created, largely thanks to the growling voices of the band's front line soloists, like Cootie Williams or "Tricky Sam" Nanton, was red hot. Together Williams and Nanton transformed the aural "vulgarity and crudities" characteristic of "hot jazz" into the orchestra's most recognizable trademark. Now Ellington's hot jazz represented the music's greatest potential for future development. The close proximity of Ellington's music's sound to the "lowly origins" of jazz was no longer a stain of condemnation among the intellectual vanguard but the primary element contributing to the music's perceived aesthetic beauty.

The African American elite's new position on jazz music spread into the pages of the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine the year Locke's critical examination of black music was published. A three-page profile of Duke Ellington appeared in the magazine's February 1936 issue. The Ellington profile marked the first time a jazz musician, bandleader, and composer, working exclusively in the jazz idiom, was profiled in the pages of *Crisis* magazine as proof of racial advancement. Chester Rosenberg, a student editor at the University of Virginia penned the article on Ellington. The profile grew out of an interview Rosenberg conducted with Ellington behind Charlottesville's Paramount Theater. Ellington, humbly dressed in an old polo shirt and baggy pants, dazzled the young student. Rosenberg caught a glimpse of Ellington's casual side as the two chatted as Ellington leaned against the body of an old Ford coupe.

The appearance of Rosenberg's profile of Ellington in *Crisis* magazine had political significance. Again, since the end of WWI *Crisis* had been the NAACP's primary vehicle for the execution of its strategy of using cultural production to trigger a

reexamination of race relations and demonstrate that African Americans were deserving of full incorporation into the American polity as social equals. That the editors of *Crisis* magazine were willing to publish a profile of Ellington meant that the NAACP was offering Ellington to America as a symbol of New Negro achievement and racial advancement. The 1936 profile raised the stakes in the organization's investment in using jazz as a political resource. Their political use of jazz blossomed beyond solely using it as a supplemental fundraising device. Now Ellington, and his music, became a tactic within the NAACP's cultural strategy, pulling him directly into the acculturationist wing of the struggle. *Crisis* was picking up where the Women's Auxiliary left off.

The intent to use Ellington as a symbol of racial advancement was clear in Rosenberg's language and contextualization of Ellington's musical genius. Rosenberg took great care to emphasize Ellington's prudent New Negro virtues and persona. Despite Ellington's casual appearance, Rosenberg wrote, "Ellington still retained the quite dignity that distinguishes him. He spoke without the slightest trace of accent."<sup>164</sup> In addition to complementing Ellington's model social behavior Rosenberg introduced the readers of *Crisis* to Ellington's dedicated work ethic; executed with such commitment that the orchestra's production of sound seemed effortless. Referring to Ellington's arrangements Rosenberg wrote, "Actually, though, they have been carefully worked out at rehearsals, which are frequently called for three O'clock in the morning, after a night's work is done."<sup>165</sup> Rosenberg suggested that when the Ellington orchestra was not actually performing they were vigorously preparing to do so in true Protestant work ethic form. Rosenberg also curiously attempted to temper the "hot jazz" label in characterizing

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<sup>164</sup> Chester Rosenberg, "Duke Ellington," *The Crisis*, February 1936, 40-41, 60, 40.

<sup>165</sup> Rosenberg, "Duke Ellington," 41.

Ellington's music for *Crisis's* readership. Rosenberg used a footnote on the article's first page to tell readers that "The word *hot*, as used in this article, does not necessarily mean loud and fast; hot music may well be soft and languid."<sup>166</sup> He liberally redefined the term and blurred the generally recognized distinction between hot and sweet jazz. This semantic move gave Rosenberg the room to further disassociate Ellington and his music from the negative moral connotations hot jazz had implied in the recent past.

Rosenberg also tried to weld a link between Ellington's jazz performance and composition style and classical music, despite his acknowledgment that Ellington had never actually formally studied the "high-brow" genre. Likely having Ellington's "Reminiscing in Tempo" in mind Rosenberg wrote, "Yet, his music closely follows the classical pattern..."<sup>167</sup> The student journalist applied classical terminology to describe Ellington's conducting style, demonstrating to his readers that terms like "presto," "allegro con spirito," and "andante" were applicable to Ellington's music. In reality Ellington's performance cues to the members of his orchestra were steeped in the vernacular of everyday black American life. He often directed the orchestra to "sock it," or "come on boys – let's go to church."<sup>168</sup>

Structural changes within the *Crisis's* management and editorial policy created the space for jazz music, via Duke Ellington, to be triumphed as a symbol of African American racial advancement. Roy Wilkins' incorporation into the NAACP's national leadership in 1931, as Assistant Secretary, instigated the internal re-configuration of the magazine's policies and practices that made way for Rosenberg's 1936 Ellington profile. Wilkins relationship with the NAACP actually began in 1922 when he joined his native

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<sup>166</sup> Rosenberg, 40.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.



St. Paul, Minnesota local branch. A recent graduate of the University of Minnesota, Wilkins was a rising star within the world of African American journalism working for St. Paul's *Appeal*. Not long after joining the civil rights organization Wilkins received an irresistible invitation to join the staff, as "news editor", of one of black America's largest news presses, *The Kansas City Call*. This new position gave Wilkins a powerful public voice that a wide readership would hear. He used that voice to rail against the injustices of segregation. Wilkins' editorials in *The Call* established a political voice that fully blossomed in 1934, when he assumed complete editorial responsibility for the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine; roughly three years after joining the organization's national operations.<sup>169</sup>

Of significance to the expansion of the NAACP's political use of jazz, as evidenced by the publication of the Ellington profile, were Wilkins' lived experiences during the time between the beginning of his tenure at *The Call* and his eventual promotion to editor of *Crisis* magazine. Roy Wilkins was only twenty-two years old when he left the comfort of St. Paul to relocate to a rough and tumble Kansas City; a town teeming with hot gut-bucket big band jazz music. Kansas City's jazz scene rivaled those in New York and Chicago during the years of Wilkins' residency. The city's rich and vibrant musical culture grew in tandem with the development of its reputations as a vibrant center for nightlife. Kansas City's ever-expanding network of gambling houses, cabarets, clubs, and brothels, many operating twenty-four hours a day, created a proliferation of job opportunities for jazz musicians. There were reportedly over fifty cabarets and clubs in Kansas City's African American section alone. The demand for

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<sup>169</sup> Roy Wilkins, Tom Mathews, *Standing Fast: The Autobiography of Roy Wilkins* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1994), 119.

musicians in Kansas City attracted many jazzmen leaving New Orleans in the wake of the 1917 closing of Storyville, the city's famed jazz center. Kansas City's nightlife reputation and musical culture flourished during prohibition. Democratic political boss Tom Pendergast's, whose machine dominated local and state politics between 1911 and 1939, blind eye and unofficial blessing of bootlegging kept whiskey flowing and ensured that Kansas City's entertainment industry continued without interruption. One of Pendergast's own lieutenants allegedly yielded nearly five million dollars in receipts from illegally produced alcohol sales.<sup>170</sup>

Kansas City's rugged environment contributed to the development of a unique and identifiable style of African American western jazz. Impromptu jam sessions taking place in clubs located in the heart of Kansas City's black community, at the intersection of 18<sup>th</sup> and Vine streets, gave rise to a blues rich, raw and earthy, simplistic yet hard-swinging sound. Wilkins arrived in Kansas City just as Benny Moten's Jazz Orchestra, who jazz historians Frank Driggs and Chuck Haddix have described as, "...The leading local band and then [early 1920s] the first African American band from Kansas City to break out nationally," was establishing Kansas City's reputation as a jazz powerhouse. Wilkins would have the opportunity to hear Count Basie, Mary Lou Williams, Jimmy Rushing, Lester Young, Hot Lips Page, and other jazz virtuoso's launch their career's in Kansas City before heading to New York. Kansas City's jazz saturated soundscape must have been music to Wilkins' ears. Wilkins spent what little free time he had from his duties at *The Call* immersed in Kansas City's vibrant jazz scene. He frequented places like Paseo Hall and other "night spots" listening to Cab Calloway, Bennie Molton, and

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<sup>170</sup> Gioia, 159-166; Frank Driggs and Chuck Haddix, *Kansas City Jazz: From Ragtime to Bebop – A History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), 5-9.

others as they passed through the city on tour “rattling the roofs,” in Wilkins’ words, of the dance halls where they performed. “The Elephant’s Wobble” and the “Evil Man Blues” were some of the most memorable tunes that Wilkins’ remembered regarding his experience with Kansas City jazz.<sup>171</sup>

Jazz was the music of Wilkins’ generation. The urbanization of black America, a result of the Great Migration, defined jazz music’s and Wilkins’ generation’s coming of age. Urbanization created the entertainment market conditions necessary for jazz to thrive. Urbanization gave rise to entertainment centers, like Kansas City’s 18<sup>th</sup> and Vine, full of venues that brought jazz musicians in contact with audiences eager to dance and listen to the music. Wilkins’ generation was the first generation of African Americans to grow into young adulthood within an urban lived experience. Jazz music provided the soundtrack to Wilkins’ generation’s lives. Wilkins, born in 1901, was actually three years Ellington’s junior. They were peers. The emerging civil rights leader literally came of age with jazz, he turned eighteen years old the year the Original Dixie Land Jazz band recorded and released the first jazz album. Wilkins’ likely heard something considerably different in the early jazz and blues recordings compared to those in the first generation of twentieth century acculturationist leaders. The simple fact of changing cultural tastes from one generation to the next had a momentous influence in shaping integrationists’ perspective on the political usage of jazz music as the next generation of twentieth century acculturationist leaders increasingly assumed decision-making and leadership roles within the movement. The fact Wilkins generation used jazz as a political resource does not in itself suggest that Wilkins generation took a more radical position regarding the effort to integrate American society relative to DuBois’ generation.

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<sup>171</sup> Driggs and Haddix, *Kansas City Jazz*, 24,44; Gioia, 159; Wilkins, Mathews, *Standing Fast*, 86.

Despite the fact that each generation relied on different genres of African American music, classical/concert and jazz respectively, each generation used these musical cultural products in approximate ways, as material and symbolic evidence of African American racial advancement. In other words, only the genre of music changed between the two generations, not the actual strategy governing the music's political use.

Roy Wilkins' experience in Kansas City's jazz scene was not always positive; he was occasionally forced to deal with the constricting limitations of its color line. A large portion of Wilkins' experience with and understanding of Jim Crow derived from a growing awareness of his limited mobility in the city's different music performance venues. The affects of the color line were most prominent at Kansas City's Orpheum Theater. The relatively large venue maintained a strict Jim Crow policy designed to segregate its patrons; African American listeners were confined to the balcony. Wilkins was often forced to swallow his pride when attending performances at the Orpheum. Recalling his experience there Wilkins' wrote, "Every time I climbed those Jim Crow stairs I was climbing Jacob's ladder backwards; every step brought me one step down." Wilkins' transformed his frustration with the Jim Crow policies in the city's major theaters into motivation for social-political activism. He eventually organized a series of boycotts against the theaters. While the boycotts were ultimately unsuccessful in shattering audience segregation practices at venues like the Orpheum Theater they did lessen Kansas City's black communities' desire to patronize Jim Crow venues. Coordinating the boycotts of Kansas City's theaters was a revealing experience for Wilkins' appreciation of activist efforts geared towards integration. Despite the fact the theater boycotts were unsuccessful in achieving their largest goal they did demonstrated

that grass roots activism could have as much influence as the power of the editorializing pen. The theaters were deprived of a valuable income stream with the decline of African American attendance.<sup>172</sup>

Roy Wilkins' experiences within the jazz world also introduced him to the ideal image of how a socially integrated society might operate. In 1929 Wilkins attended a breakfast dance held at one of Harlem's casino/dance halls while on a trip to New York. Harlem's breakfast dances usually began around three or four o'clock in the morning and typically lasted until eight or nine o'clock. Their name derived from the fact that at the end of the dance patrons were served a morning breakfast before heading to work. Harlem's breakfast dances acquainted Wilkins with a significantly different entertainment experience relative to Kansas City's segregated jazz scene. Harlem's breakfast dances were integrated affairs. The degree of interracial interaction at the dance fascinated Wilkins. He marveled at the fact that there were "three hundred whites in a crowd of two thousand black people." He soon found himself engaged in a conversation regarding race relations with a patron who was a white publisher. Wilkins' recalled an enlightening portion of their conversation,

"Well, one thing is for certain: this could not happen in Kansas City, because any policeman in town knows that stopping race mixing is a more sacred duty than stopping any bank robbery." "But my dear young man," said the publisher, "can *anything* happen in a place like Kansas City? You see...the significant thing about this interracial association in New York is that it is not wholly a black-and-tan sporting proposition such as you have in Chicago. I would ask you to dinner not because I want the 'thrill' of having a colored man at my table, but because I want *you*,"<sup>173</sup>

Wilkins' conversation with the patron at the dance introduced him to an integrated environment in which race was neutralized. Wilkins' character, not the color of his skin,

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<sup>172</sup> Wilkins and Mathews, 63.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

set the tone for the interracial social interaction he experienced. The newspaper editor's socio-political career gravitated towards the effort to replicate breakfast dance styled integration in other American social, political, and economic spaces.

In 1930 Wilkins was offered an opportunity to join the NAACP's national leadership staff. DuBois and the *Crisis* were in need of a talented business manager who knew the ins and outs of the newspaper and magazine industry. The magazine was in the midst of deepening financial distress. Beginning in 1927 the *Crisis*' circulation and revenue began to decline. The Great Depression dramatically amplified the magazine's financial problems. By 1931 it was operating \$15,000 dollars in the red. By 1932 the circulation of the official voice of the NAACP, which had once soared over 100,000 copies monthly, had declined by approximately 88% from its peak. Roy Wilkins was a natural choice for the job of financially resurrecting *Crisis* back into the black.<sup>174</sup>

DuBois wrote to Wilkins with an offer to join *Crisis* magazine as business manager. Wilkins, however, was hesitant to accept DuBois' offer. The job with *Crisis* came with a significantly lower salary compared to what Wilkins currently earned at *The Call* and he did not want to abandon his role communicating with the public as an editor for a back office position. Additionally, DuBois was rumored to have a personality that was difficult to work with. Wilkins consulted Walter White, the NAACP's Assistant Secretary, as he brooded over the decision to accept DuBois' offer. In a letter responding to Wikins' concerns White wrote, "Dr. DuBois has worked very hard to make it what it is and I say this in no criticism of him, but what the *Crisis* needs most is expert business methods and, more than that, it needs energy, intelligence, youth, and business foresight

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 118; Box 22, "Report of the Survey of the NAACP" (3/22/1932), Roy Wilkins Papers, 1901-1890, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

for its development.” White’s letter suggested that the leadership of the magazine was overdue for a changing of the guard. Despite the potential opportunity to take *Crisis* in new directions Wilkins decided to pass on this initial opportunity to join the NAACP’s national leadership team. Wilkins did however join the NAACP’s national leadership team the following year. James Weldon Johnson retired from the organization in 1931. When Walter White stepped into Johnson’s shoes as the NAACP’s Executive Secretary the Assistant Secretary position became vacant. Wilkins jumped at the opportunity to assume the position’s responsibilities and challenges. The hefty salary increase that Wilkins received likely contributed to his motivation to leave Kansas City and *The Call*.<sup>175</sup>

Wilkins came on board in a moment when the NAACP was in the middle of an internal review. The struggling *Crisis* was a major focus of the review. The concluding report that the internal survey produced offered several recommendations for remedying the *Crisis*’ financial troubles. One option recommended suspending publication of the magazine altogether. However, the report further suggested that the potential value of future publications, assuming the magazine could be retooled to turn a modest \$2,000 per issue profit, would provide a faster method for reducing the magazine’s debt, a quarter of which was attributed to DuBois’ salary.<sup>176</sup>

The internal review report also called into question *Crisis*’ ability to effectively continue to operate as the voice of the NAACP in its current format. The report read,

The question of the usefulness of the *Crisis* as an organ for the NAACP is more complicated. I am of the opinion that it would be a difficult technical question to decide how best to use the *Crisis* or a new bulletin as a vehicle for NAACP doctrine. The present set-up of the *Crisis* may add to the

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<sup>175</sup> Wilkins and Mathews, 96.

<sup>176</sup> Box 22, “Report of the Survey of the NAACP” (3/22/1932), Roy Wilkins Papers, 1901-1980, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

difficulties, but important questions would remain to be settled if the Association were in complete control.<sup>177</sup>

The report attributed a portion of the *Crisis*' difficulties to tensions between DuBois and White over the publication's news and editorial content. The strained relationship between the two leaders was rooted in the 1931 reorganization of the magazine's business side as a division of the NAACP. Before 1931 the *Crisis* operated as a completely autonomous business enterprise from the NAACP. *Crisis* spoke on behalf of the NAACP, but was technically not a part of the civil rights organization. The NAACP and the *Crisis* drew their budgets and funding from separate treasuries. The magazine's self-sustaining profitability during the years leading up to 1928 made its independence possible. In 1931, as *Crisis* plunged deeper into insolvency, the NAACP actually purchased magazine and assumed its debts. When White and the NAACP's executive committee assumed control of the magazine's business affairs they also began to offer suggestions regarding its content. Previous to the NAACP's buyout of *Crisis* magazine Dubois exercised complete control over the magazine's content. In addition to suffering from financial difficulties the magazine was becoming the victim of clashing visions over its news and editorial mission. More damaging than internal conflict, the report suggested that *Crisis*' growing social and cultural irrelevance was the magazine's greatest hindrance to its ability to serve as NAACP's official voice and its return to profitability. The report suggested, "A still more fundamental question is that of editorial control. The magazine has three disadvantages, editorially. It is run by one man. It is run by an intellectual. It is run on the same basis on which it was run fifteen or twenty years ago."

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<sup>177</sup> Box 22, "Report of the Survey of the NAACP" (3/22/1932), Roy Wilkins Papers, 1901-1980, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.



Over the course of the twenty years since the publication's incorporation it had, in some ways, failed to respond to the social and cultural changes within the African American experience that had taken place.<sup>178</sup>

Taking the results and recommendations of the report into consideration the NAACP organized an internal "Press Conference" consulting unit in early 1932. The "Press Conference", comprised of a four-member team including DuBois, Irene C. Malvan—the magazine's business manager—Herbert J. Seligmann and Roy Wilkins, was charged with the task of developing a new content model that would return *Crisis* to profitability. The magazine's readership first saw the influence of the Press Conference in the May 1932 issue. An introductory note to the May issue told readers, "This month, we are beginning the transformation of 'Along the Color Line' into new reviews of pregnant happenings touching colored people and race relations all across the world. This department will be conducted by the press conference." The "Along the Color Line (ACL)" feature had been a mainstay of *Crisis* for years. ACL was first introduced as a news coverage network of the entire African Diaspora, from Los Angeles to East Africa, spreading awareness of black achievement. ACL's content had been organized along regional lines. Beginning with the May 1932 issue DuBois was relieved of editorial control over ACL. Primarily in accord with Wilkins' vision, ACL's news and achievement updates were reorganized into topical groups; Politics, Jim Crow, Work – Waste – Wealth, Folks, Theatre, Schools, Art – Music, Books, Foreign News, Sports.<sup>179</sup>

The most immediate and noticeable difference in ACL in the eyes of the *Crisis*' readership, however, was the restructured feature's new direction in content, especially as

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<sup>178</sup>Box 22, "Report of the Survey of the NAACP" (3/22/1932), Roy Wilkins Papers, 1901-1980, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>179</sup> Table of Content Page, *The Crisis*, May 1932, pg. 1.

it related to culture and cultural production. In regards to music the success of concert singer Roland Hayes, violinist Louia Vaughn Jones, Paul Robeson, Marion Anderson, The Utica and Fisk Jubilee Singers, and the Hampton Choir were often trumpeted for their accomplishments in concert, classical and spirituals performances in the old ACL. ACL coverage of jazz, blues, ragtime, and musical theater before the Press Conference assumed control was non-existent. Indeed, the internal report's assertion that *Crisis*' content was being driven by a twenty year old vision was right; DuBois had used ACL to document accomplishments in the same African American musical styles he eloquently celebrated in his 1903 *Souls of Black Folk*.

The Press Conference's new ACL caught up with black America's cultural growth as the feature introduced *Crisis*' readers to a host of names they were more than likely already very familiar with. The May 1932 ACL told readers about Duke Ellington's record-breaking transcontinental tour from coast to coast. Readers also learned about a "jazz loving [New York City] Magistrate" who dismissed Arthur Cremin's, a white classical music teacher, attempt to get an injunction barring "Lanky, grinning, piano-playing band master Claude Hopkins" from performing hot jazz. The Magistrate's verdict, "It is not a crime to play jazz, and there is no law against it," was reprinted for the readers of *Crisis*. The May 1932 issue also marked the first time popular theater was covered in ACL. In the issues following the May edition ACL circulated awareness of Bill Bojangles Robinson, Eubie Blake, Don Redmon, Cab Calloway, Marion Hardy's Alabamians, and the Duke Ellington Orchestra. Jazz music instantly began to play an active role in the Press Conference's attempt to revitalize *Crisis* and expand its circulation.

The May 1932 ACL demonstrated *Crisis*' attempt to recast its position on jazz music especially in relation to other musical genres. Just three month before the Press Conference assumed control of ACL, the magazine, in reference to baritone concert singer Aubrey Pankey's favorable reception in Europe, reprinted a translated German critic's review of Pankey stating that, "Europe tried to picture the musical Negro only as the dancing clown of a jazz band, but there are among the blacks real bearers of the best culture." The republishing of this particular passage likely suggested to readers that *Crisis* endorsed a view jazz that relegated the music as the accompaniment for buffoonery. The May 1932 issue updated the magazine's perspective on jazz to account for the music's exponentially growing popularity among the masses and the standard bearers of high culture alike.<sup>180</sup>

By 1934 the mounting tension between DuBois and the NAACP's executive leadership, especially Walter White and Joel Spingarn, reached its climax. DuBois used his editorial column in the January and February issues of *Crisis* to admonish the NAACP's executive team for their failure to develop a coherent and consistent position regarding racial segregation as well as the organization's failure to develop an economic plank in their efforts to improve the lives of black Americans. White and Spingarn both responded to DuBois' criticisms in the March 1934 issue. The intensifying debate between DuBois, White, and Spingarn unfolded before NAACP supporters in the pages of *Crisis* over the course of the spring and eventually prompted DuBois' resignation that summer. The August issue of *Crisis* was published without an editor-in-chief. DuBois' letter of resignation, along with the NAACP board's resolution to accept it, was published within the issue.

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<sup>180</sup> "Along the Color Line," *The Crisis*, February 1932, 62.

Roy Wilkins was the natural choice for DuBois' successor. Wilkins officially assumed editorial control of voice of the NAACP with the September issue. Wilkins' name appeared as managing editor on the magazine's masthead. The NAACP organized an advisory board, including Spingarn, White, James Weldon Johnson, and others to assist Wilkins in his transition into this new leadership position. Wilkins appreciated the help; he took control of *Crisis* at its lowest point. The magazine's circulation had fallen below 10,000 and was still operating in debt.<sup>181</sup>

Wilkins immediately began to take *Crisis* in a new editorial direction, one that likely caught the attention of the magazines readership. The "Along the Color Line" segment was transformed into "Along the NAACP Battlefront." The new column dedicated its space to reporting on national and local branch efforts to erode racial discrimination as opposed to simply documenting and celebrating black achievement. Wilkins' most significant change to the magazine came in the form of a full-page article examining the career of jazz pianist and bandleader Thomas 'Fats' Waller. Wilkins' September 1934 addition of *Crisis* marked the first time in the history of the publication's run that a jazz musician and entertainer had been discussed in a feature article. If the mention of jazz in the ACL column beginning in 1932 did not signal to NAACP supporters and *Crisis*' readership that the organization was warming to jazz, Wilkins "Radio's Roly-Poly Organist" career profile of Waller certainly did. Fats Waller's profile, the product of an interview the musician gave Wilkins in the minutes before a CBS radio broadcast, documented Waller's entrance into the music business, his musical

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<sup>181</sup> Wilkins and Mathews, *Standing Fast*, 152-155.

training, discussion of his most notable compositions, as well as his radio broadcast schedule.<sup>182</sup>

Wilkins was a huge fan of Wallers' music. The gifted pianist and organist had toured the mid-west, playing in picture houses, during the years Wilkins spent in jazz rich Kansas City. It is quite possible Wilkins might have even seen Fats Waller at work in Kansas City. Wilkins' enthusiasm towards Waller's jazz was only half the reason that the new editor opted to include Waller's profile in the 1934 issue of *Crisis* magazine. The other half of that decision was grounded in Wilkins' desire to make the magazine reconnect with the interests of an African American readership base that he hoped to significantly expand. Coverage of the jazz world played a primary role in Wilkins' strategy to return the magazine to profitability and provided him with a reliable source for content. Reflecting upon the importance the Waller profile had in the moment when he took editorial control of *Crisis* Wilkins wrote, "I had the first series of entertainment features that rescued me when all other contributors failed."<sup>183</sup> A profile of Willie 'Long John' Bryant, a young jazz trumpeter and bandleader taking Harlem by storm, followed in the March 1935 issue of the magazine. Time proved Wilkins strategy for reviving the magazine by covering popular culture successful. By 1948 *Crisis*' circulation had rebounded to 40,000 issues monthly, an increase of over 400% at an average pace of approximately 2,000 new subscribers annually.<sup>184</sup>

Wilkins' editorial vision, along with the career profiles of Fats Waller and Willie Bryant paved the way for Chester Rosenberg's profile of Duke Ellington in the February 1936 issue. Rosenberg's profile of Ellington expanded the role that African

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<sup>182</sup> Roy Wilkins, "Radio's Roly-Poly Organist," *The Crisis*, September 1934, 261.

<sup>183</sup> Wilkins and Mathews, *Standing Fast*, 156.

<sup>184</sup> Box 22, Roy Wilkins Papers, 1901-1980, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

American jazz music played within *Crisis*' revival and the larger political strategy of the NAACP. Unlike the descriptive profiles of Waller and Bryant, Rosenberg went out of his way to portray Ellington, the man, as a model example of the New Negro. Rosenberg's Ellington profile may have additionally played a role in rebuilding Ellington's relationship with other areas of the NAACP's national office. In 1938 his benefit concert fundraising relationship with the national office was recast. He annually performed an NAACP benefit show at the New York Metropolitan Opera House, a tradition that extended beyond WWII. Ellington also became a "Lifetime Member" of the association the following year for having personally contributed five hundred dollars to the national office's treasury. Nor was Ellington the only African American jazz musician the NAACP began to represent as a symbol of racial achievement. In the June 1936 issue of *Crisis* poet Norman Macleod detailed the creative inspiration he received through listening to Louis Armstrong. The ever-enchanting jazz vocalist Lena Horne graced the cover of the January 1943 issue of the NAACP publication.<sup>185</sup>

Duke Ellington's own political consciousness, rooted in New Negro acculturationist ideology, came of age during WWII. The December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor and the ensuing United States' declaration of war against Japan, and subsequently, the Axis powers, triggered a figurative audible in the integrationist approach to advancing African Americans within American society. Led by the editorial writers of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, black America's largest circulation newspaper, integrationist leaders and organizations adopted a "Double-V" campaign strategy to advocate for African American interests. The "Double-V" campaign was based on the

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<sup>185</sup> NAACP Certificate of Life Membership, Duke Ellington Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

idea that African Americans, with their nation at war, would fight for justice on two fronts. The *Courier* patriotically called for African American citizens to fight against Hitler's fascism abroad while continuing to fight against racial exclusion at home. Ellington answered, and in doing so, began to tap into the political power of his music. He mobilized jazz music in the context of the "Double V" campaign and he did so on his own terms.<sup>186</sup>

Ellington's political consciousness was not created by the climate of African American political activism during World War II. Beginning in the early 1930s Ellington began to articulate a desire to contribute towards African Americans' struggle for equality. He wanted to use jazz to musically express the true nature of black identity, free from the confining racial stereotypes usually surrounding the creation and consumption of African American musical entertainment. Entertaining American audiences while maintaining the dignity and pride of his race posed an artistic conflict that Ellington worked to resolve during the first decades of his professional career. Ellington told *New York Evening Graphic Magazine's* Florence Zunger, in a 1930 interview that, "I am not playing jazz. I am trying to play the natural feelings of a people." In a 1931 article composed by Ellington himself for *Rhythm Magazine* he wrote, "The music of my race is something more than the 'American idiom.' It is the result of our transplantation to American soil, and was our reaction in the plantation days to the tyranny we endured. What we could not say openly we expressed in music, and what we know as 'jazz' is something more than just dance music." In the same article Ellington went on to say that, "The history of my people is one of great achievements

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<sup>186</sup> Beth Bailey and David Farber, "The 'Double-V' Campaign in World War II Hawaii: African Americans, Racial Ideology, and Federal Power," *Journal of Social History* 26, No. 4 (Summer 1993), 817-843, 817.

over fearful odds; it is a history of a people hindered, handicapped, and often sorely oppressed, and what is being done by Countee Cullen and others in literature is overdue in our music. I am now therefore engaged on a rhapsody unhampered by any musical form in which I intend to portray the experiences of the coloured races in America in the syncopated idiom.”<sup>187</sup> One of the goals of Ellington’s compositional agenda over the 1930s and early 1940s was to pull his music into the scope of cultural activism that had taken place at the height of the Harlem Renaissance movement. A reoccurring theme in Ellington’s interviews with the press over the course of the decade was his special project musically expressing the prideful and triumphant history of the black American experience. It is no coincidence that Ellington’s political consciousness found its voice in the moment when political organizations like the NAACP, CPUSA, and the BSCP were all capitalizing on the political value his music contained.

The Double-V campaign gave Ellington’s political consciousness direction. John Pittman, writing about Ellington as an artist and a person during this moment described Ellington as a “Race Man.” Characterizing Ellington as a race man Pittman wrote, “That term speaks volumes to America’s 15,000,000 Negroes. It means national loyalty, patriotism, devotion to the ideals of the nation. Ellington is all of those things.”<sup>188</sup> In January 1943, a year into the Double-V strategy, Ellington made his contribution to the war at home. Before a near capacity Carnegie Hall audience, Duke Ellington and his Orchestra introduced his now famous extended suite *Black, Brown, and Beige*.

According to Ellington, “*Black, Brown and Beige* was planned as a tone parallel to the

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<sup>187</sup> Florence Zunger, “ ‘Opera Must Die’, Says Galli-Curci! Long Live the Blues!,” *New York Evening Graphic Magazine*, 27 December 1930.

<sup>188</sup> John Pittman, “A few sidelights on Ellington, Artist and Man,” Duke Ellington Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.



history of the American Negro.”<sup>189</sup> The suite was divided into three sections. Ellington hoped that the first section, *Black*, would demonstrate the common roots and connections between seemingly different genres of African American music. The second section, *Brown*, was composed to “recognize the contribution made by the Negro to [America] in blood,” musically tracing African participation in the American Revolution through African American involvement in the Spanish-American War. *Beige*, the third and final section, was designed to dispel popularly held misconceptions about Ellington’s own community, Harlem, and its hard-working, economically aspiring residents. Ellington wanted *Beige* to illuminate the reality of Harlem’s African American experience, a reality that would expose “...that there were more churches than cabarets, that people were trying to find a more stable way of living, and that the Negro was rich in experience and education.” Ellington’s perspective was reflected in James Weldon Johnson’s now historical *Black Manhattan*, where Johnson suggested that, “Of necessity, the vast majority of them [Harlemites] are ordinary, hard-working people, who spend their time in just about the same way that ordinary, hard-working people do. Most of them have never seen the inside of a night club.”<sup>190</sup>

The unhampered rhapsody that Ellington sought to create materialized as *Black, Brown, and Beige*. Historian Kevin Gaines suggested that *Black, Brown, and Beige* represented “...Ellington’s general efforts to express black cultural and historical sensibilities...” and that the extended suite presented Ellington’s “Self-conscious construction of historically situated narratives of African American group consciousness....”. The composition was a cultural product that African American

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<sup>189</sup> Duke Ellington, *Music is My Mistress* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 181.

<sup>190</sup> James Weldon Johnson, *Black Manhattan* (New York: Arno Press, New York Times, 1930), 161; Ellington, *Music is My Mistress*, 181-182.

communities could collectively share. It created a historical record of a triumphant history that could be used as a source of inspiration for African Americans in their continued struggles. Indeed, Dan Burley's extended *Amsterdam News* review of the concert headlined, "Says Duke's Concert Advanced Race 20 Years" suggesting to all of Harlem the significance of the event. Burley's grand headline actually came from a quote by an unnamed "liberally inclined white person" he overheard while standing on the steps outside of the prestigious venue. For Burley, the strength of *Black, Brown, and Beige* was found in its ability to motivate white Americans to re-think race relations and the role of African Americans in American society.<sup>191</sup> Historian Scott DeVeux suggested that, "By wedding this program to evocative music and giving it a polished, professional, and dignified performance at Carnegie Hall, Ellington clearly hoped to educate his [racially diverse] audience and influence public opinion." In Dan Burley's opinion Ellington's efforts seemed to find success.<sup>192</sup>

Ellington's second offensive strike against the domestic front line was launched in December 1943, again from the stage at Carnegie Hall. Ellington introduced listeners to his second major extended suite titled *A New World A' Comin'*. The suite was the musical representation of Ellington's belief in man's potential to create a better society. Reflecting upon the significance of the suite Ellington remembered, "I visualized this

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<sup>191</sup> Dan Burley, "Says Duke's Concert Advanced Race 20 Years," *New York Amsterdam News*, 30 January 1943, p. 17.

<sup>192</sup> Scott DeVeux, "Black, Brown and Beige and the Critics," *Black Music Research Journal* 13, no. 2 (Autumn 1993): 125-146, 129. DeVeux's research on critics' responses to *Black, Brown, and Beige* revealed that critics responded to the suite with harsh criticism based primarily on its musicological aesthetic value. Ironically, even African American critic Dan Burley in the *Amsterdam News* criticized the suite for its lack of an identifiable theme. Though, it is worth noting that Burley's assessment of the music itself was largely based upon the judgment of *Herald-Tribune* writer Paul Bowles. Burley was also highly critical of the musical merits of *A New World A' Comin'*, calling the suite spotty. DeVeux has suggested that the combination of cultural snobbery and racism drove the largely negative critical response to the musical merits of *Black, Brown and Beige*.

new world as a place in the distant future where there would be no war, no greed, no categorization, no-nonbelievers, where love was unconditional, and no pronoun was good enough for God.”<sup>193</sup> Racial equality and the liberty of self-definition were the basic pillars buttressing the foundation upon which his distant future dream would come into being. *A New World A’ Comin’* helped keep African American communities focused on the possibilities of an American society in which diversity and equality went hand-in-hand, an important theme for a moment when those communities were struggling to integrate American institutions.<sup>194</sup>

Ellington made his contribution to the fight against fascism abroad through the United States Treasury Department. The United States government politically mobilized Ellington’s commercial appeal to sell war bonds to the American public. The Treasury’s war bond program, first known as defense bonds, was the Roosevelt administration’s solution for raising the financial capital needed to fund the war effort without having to levy a war tax on the American public. The program was voluntary, American consumers of financial products could decide whether or not to purchase the bonds and with what frequency. The war bonds did offer buyers a solid investment. They sold at 75% of their value after a ten-year maturity, meaning that investors could purchase a war bond for \$18.75 that they could cash-in for \$25 dollars in ten years. Despite their guaranteed appreciation war bond sales were modest in the program’s early months of operation. Large institutional investors purchased that vast majority of bonds that were sold. The program was falling short in its effort to additionally compel ordinary

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<sup>193</sup> Ellington, *Music is My Mistress*, 183.

<sup>194</sup> Kevin Gaines, “Duke Ellington, *Black, Brown, and Beige*, and the Cultural Politics of Race,” *Music and the Racial Imagination*, ed. Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 585 – 604, 587; Graham Lock, *Blutopia: Visions of the Future and Revisions of the Past in the Works of Sun Ra, Duke Ellington, and Anthony Braxton* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 77-78

American citizens to purchase bonds and patriotically contribute to the war effort. In July 1941 the Treasury Department began to broadcast a weekly radio program titled *Treasury Hour* to intensify its efforts to sell war bonds to the ordinary American investor.<sup>195</sup>

The December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941 catastrophic attack on Pearl Harbor was the factor that changed the momentum in American citizens' demand for bonds. Buying war bonds in the wake of the infamous assault was a strong expression of patriotism for many Americans, especially for those not apart of the military or defense industry. A Treasury staff member involved with the program expressed their desire that the program become, "the central rallying point for the war on the home front." In the wake of Pearl Harbor the program's operations and targeted approach to bond sales became increasingly sophisticated. Peter H. Odegard, a political scientist with research interests in political propaganda and hired by Treasury Secretary Henry F. Morgenthau Jr. to manage the war bond program, created lines of appeal used to help construct the public perception that war bond purchases were patriotic expressions. The many war bond posters, some even equating bonds with weapons, are perhaps the most commonly remembered lines of appeal that Odegard helped create.<sup>196</sup>

Morgenthau and Odegard also enlisted the commercial power of American celebrity to entice potential bond purchasers, African American entertainers included. Harry Levette, an *Amsterdam News* Hollywood correspondent, reported that approximately sixty-one African American entertainers had donated their talent to support the activities of the War and Treasury Departments, including Duke Ellington,

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<sup>195</sup> James J. Kimble, *Mobilizing the Home Front: War Bonds and Domestic Propaganda* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 5, 23, 30-2.

<sup>196</sup> Kimble, *Mobilizing the Home Front*, 2005, 22-3, 32-6, (As quoted in Kimble, 37).

Count Basie, and Louis Armstrong from the jazz world. While African American entertainers performed for both black and white audiences, in segregated shows, the Treasury Department's interests in using African American entertainers may have been rooted in a specific desire target would-be African American bond purchasers. Where Ellington and his Orchestra's jazz was once being used to raise money for the NAACP and BSCP and construct displays of interracial solidarity for CPUSA, the United States Government was now also tapping into the political power of jazz to generate financial resources. Ellington and others, working within the Double-V philosophy, happily allowed the United States to capitalize upon the mobilization of their artistic crafts. Morgenthau and the Treasury Department expressed their appreciation by issuing two citations of merit in 1942 to "Duke Ellington and his Orchestra," and "Edward K. 'Duke' Ellington," respectively, for "Distinguished services rendered in behalf of the National War Savings Program."<sup>197</sup>

Jazz music proved to be a very flexible political resource over the course of the New Negro wave of the liberation struggle. Structural changes within New Negro movement centers, coupled with the entrance of new leaders and decision makers, were responsible for bring jazz into the black political sphere. Once the relationship between the music and politics was cemented jazz was put to work in multiple ways. Not only was jazz used widely across the ideological spectrum of New Negro organizations, including the NAACP, Urban League, BSCP, and CPUSA organizations, but the music also became one of the greatest symbols of racial advancement as the era progressed.

Jazz also offered New Negro activists a strategy of action that was adaptable to the

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<sup>197</sup> Harray Levette, "Colored Entertainers Lauded for Their Splendid War Work," *New York Amsterdam News*, 28 November 1942, 15; Duke Ellington Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

changing domestic political climate prompted by United States military engagement in World War II. Jazz musicians' contributions to the war effort gave New Negroes a way to evidence black America's patriotism within the Double-V campaign. Jazz musicians' contributions to federal World War II programs, however, paved the way for the government's co-optation of the music's political power during the Cold War era. The Cold War had a transformative effect on the relationship between jazz and the struggle. Against the backdrop of the music's stylistic evolution, the following chapter will discuss how the Cold War reconfigured the role jazz played within the struggle for liberation.

CHAPTER 3  
“‘ELLINGTON CAN SPOT A COMMIE FROM FOUR BLOCKS AWAY AND  
AROUND THE CORNER,’ THE COLD WAR’S INFLUENCE ON THE  
MOBILIZATION OF JAZZ, 1945-1955”<sup>198</sup>

The decade between the end of World War II and the mid-1950s witnessed significant transformations in the political relationship between jazz music and the Black Liberation Struggle. The Cold War, beginning in the aftermath of the Second World War, was largely responsible for instigating that transformation. The Cold War prompted a shift in what McAdam described as the “structure of political opportunities” needed for liberation struggle socio-political activists to successfully wage social protest movements. As a concept, the “structure of political opportunities” identified the degree of power that social activists held in relation to the dominant political establishment. Changes in the structure of political opportunities as a consequence of the Cold War, especially the political repression of the radical left, reconfigured the Black Liberation Struggle. As liberation struggle activists adjusted their strategies of activism to navigate the Cold War’s domestic political climate they also adjusted their approaches towards how and why they mobilized jazz music.<sup>199</sup>

The Cold War defined the contentious rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union in the wake of World War II for political and economic control over nations emerging from colonialism around the globe. The United States’ declaration of Cold War is often cited with the 1947 introduction of the Truman Doctrine, calling for a strategy of containment based on the philosophy that the spread of communism anywhere

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<sup>198</sup> Frederick Woltman, “Duke Ellington Gets Hot Over Red Tune that he Signed Peace Petition,” Newspaper title and publication date unknown, Ellington Scrap Book, Duke Ellington Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

<sup>199</sup> Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 40-42.

threatened American democracy. The Truman Doctrine set the pace of U.S. Cold War era foreign policy. Domestic life within the United States during the early years of the Cold War was defined by McCarthyism, where the overwhelming anti-communist sentiment of the American public paved the way for the House Un-American Activities Committee, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and other organs of the state to repress suspected communists and communist sympathizers within the country. Historian William Chafe has argued that the combination of the Cold War and its domestic anti-communist ripple effects shaped the path of political discourse within the United States and curtailed the possibility of achieving the types of social reform that the liberation struggle hoped to achieve until the mid-1960s. The Cold War and its influence on the American political and socio-political landscapes created an environment in which pre-WWII liberation struggle movement centers were shattered, and at the same time created the conditions for new movement centers to congeal.<sup>200</sup>

As African American socio-political activists adjusted to fight for black advancement during the early years of the Cold War, a rising generation of young, urban African American musicians was stylistically expanding the boundaries of jazz as a genre through the creation of “modern jazz.” Also known as “bebop,” modern jazz was characterized by its theoretical complexity and its emphasis on improvised, rapid tempo melodic riffs. Modern jazz musicians charted new musical territory through their use of new and challenging chord progressions. The introduction of this new music into the jazz community triggered sharp debates within the jazz world over its aesthetic value and social meaning. In the process of creating modern jazz African American musicians gave

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<sup>200</sup> William Chafe, “American Since 1945,” *The New American History*, ed. Eric Foner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 159-177, 160-161.



creative and expressive voice to a new configuration of African American identity also in the process of being made, an identity that would inform the protest consciousnesses of activists participating in the new movement centers the Cold War helped to create.

This chapter examines the transformations in the mobilization of jazz music and offers a new vantage point to examine the Cold War's effects on the Black Liberation Struggle. In discussing changes in the political mobilization of jazz music this chapter will continue to build on the example of Duke Ellington. Maintaining the focus on the political use of Ellington's jazz in this moment of rupture will best demonstrate the influences of the Cold War on the BLS and its ability to utilize its resource base. Second, it examines the birth of modern jazz and the effects the new music had on the jazz community. In discussing the "bebop revolution," as modern jazz's moments of inception have been called, I will specifically address the music's relation to an emergent configuration of African American identity and dispel the myth that jazz at-large lost its commercial appeal as a consequence of modern jazz's expansion of the genre. Accounting for jazz's continued commercial appeal during this period is important given that the music's marketplace viability buttressed its political value as described in the previous chapter.

The Cold War reshaped the structure of political opportunities for the Black Liberation Struggle in two critical ways. First, the Cold War gave opponents of African American advancement a powerful excuse to turn the tidal wave of anti-communist sentiment against African American socio-political activists, in an effort to wash away the strongest and most outspoken voices challenging racial oppression. Historian Mary Dudziak has noted the ways in which the McCarthyist political climate constricted the

actions and voices of African American activists challenging broad based racial discrimination within the United States. She suggested that, “By silencing certain voices and by promoting particular vision of racial justice, the Cold War led to a narrowing of acceptable civil rights discourse. The narrow boundaries of Cold War era civil rights politics kept discussion of broad-based social change or a linking of race and class, off the agenda.”<sup>201</sup> Black socio-political activism on the organized labor front was especially curtailed. For example, the activities of black tobacco workers in Winston Salem, NC, members of the Food, Agricultural, and Allied Workers FTA-CIO Local 22, were derailed as a consequence of domestic Cold War politics. During the early 1940s the African American tobacco unionists struggled against the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company and Winston Salem’s city leaders for better treatment of blacks in both the workplace and within the larger community. Before the beginning of the Cold War African Americans successfully used Local 22 to gain ground in voting rights, affordable housing, and civil representation. Robert Korstad demonstrated how the Red Scare provided corporate management and city leaders with an opportunity to suppress the activism of Local 22 and its membership. Korstad argued, “The Cold War isolated the worker’s movement from its most important allies. As in the first Reconstruction, once the political tides shifted with the end of World War II, the Republican capture of Congress, and the advent of the Cold War, the federal government moved quickly from ally to adversary.”<sup>202</sup> The radical wing of the Black Liberation Struggle’s wartime ties to the communist party, by way of organized labor, made it an easy target.

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<sup>201</sup> Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 13.

<sup>202</sup> Robert Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill, NC; UNC Press, 2003), 9-10.

Second, the Soviet Union's exploitation of documented and reported instances of discrimination against African Americans as anti-American propaganda abroad transformed civil rights into a major foreign policy issue for the United States. Dudziak also noted that, "Domestic civil rights crises would quickly become international crises. As for Presidents and Secretaries of State from 1946 to the mid-1960s worried about the effects of race discrimination on U.S. prestige abroad, civil rights reform came to be seen as crucial to U.S. foreign relations."<sup>203</sup> The federal government's new focus on civil rights created new opportunities for African American political activists to pursue the goals of the Black Liberation Struggle, old and new. The government's simultaneous repression of black civil rights organizations and activists and growing foreign policy interests in civil rights rerouted the energy of black political activism into new channels. If we understand the Black Liberation Struggle during the twentieth century as a composite of successive and distinct waves of socio-political movements, then the period between the end of WWII and the mid-1950s can be characterized by the recession of one wave pulling back from the shoreline, providing the foundation for the next wave beginning to swell. The New Negro wave that was characterized by its trans-ideological collaborative ethos dissipated under the pressure of Cold War political repression. In its place a new series of new movement centers, include the black church, historically black college and university campuses, and the jazz community, emerged and joined remnant New Negro organizations to produce a new wave of liberation struggle activism.

Changes in the relationship between jazz music and the Black Liberation Struggle during this period, and specifically the ways in which jazz was, and was not, politically

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<sup>203</sup> Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 6.

mobilized, make clear the effects that the Cold War had upon the liberation struggle at large. During this period three identifiable trends in the political mobilization of jazz emerged and signaled that the liberation struggle was remaking itself between the end of WWII and the mid-1950s. First, the pre-WWII access organizations located across the political spectrum enjoyed in calling on commercially successful jazz music as a political resource significantly narrowed. Before WWII the political mobilization of commercial jazz was contingent upon a jazz musician's or band's consent. Organizations like the NAACP, CPUSA and its subsidiaries, and the BSCP were able to use Duke Ellington's music to help accomplish their goals only because Ellington willingly made his music and his orchestra available to those organizations. However, as radical organizations like those affiliated with the Communist Party came under attack musicians, like Ellington, consciously distanced themselves in an effort to protect their careers and reputations. The ties between jazz and radical labor activism that formed during the 1920s and 1930s dissolved in the late 1940s and early 1950s under the pressure of Cold War political repression. The NAACP was one of the few socio-political organizations continuing to mobilize jazz music during this period. Scholar Harold Cruse noted how the anti-communist fervor of the early Cold War period narrowed the range of black activism taking place before World War II down to the work of the NAACP after.<sup>204</sup>

Organizations like the National Negro Congress (NNC) and the Civil Rights Congress (CRC), who rivaled the NAACP between the mid-1930s and early 1950s in their ability to press for the advancement of black civil rights, collapsed under the weight political repression. Both organizations were closely connected with the American Communist Party. The NNC, founded in 1935, was known for its use of boycotts against

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<sup>204</sup> Harold Cruse, *Plural But Equal* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1987).

retail stores refusing to employ African Americans as a method of gaining valuable work opportunities for blacks during the depression. The NNC organizationally linked CPUSA with black intellectuals to support labor unionization, resistance to fascism, and civil protest tactics to end racial employment discrimination. Historian Beth Tompkins Bates has noted how the NNC's pursuit of aggressive strategies focused on alleviating black economic distress during the depression, including the "Don't Buy, Where You Can't Work" demonstrations, nudged the NAACP to follow suit. In late 1946 the NNC combined with the International Labor Defense and National Federation of Constitutional Liberties to form the Civil Rights Congress (CRC), an organization that used court cases and vigorous civil rights supportive publicity campaigns to create opportunities for African Americans in major industrial cities. Historian Josh Sides has described the CRC as the "civil rights wing of the Communist Party." In local communities the CRC collaborated with labor unions and community groups to expand the availability of housing to working-class African Americans as well in an effort to curb employment discrimination and police brutality. The CRC's ties to the Communist Party, however, made the organization a key target of political repression. More conservative New Negro African American leaders like educators Mary McLeod Bethune and Benjamin Mays withdrew support from the organization because of its growing affiliation with communism. By the mid-1950s the CRC dissolved. The rising legal fees associated with defending the organization against the Internal Revenue Service and the House Committee on Un-American Activities financially bled the organization dry and forced it to shut its operations down.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 177; Beth Tompkins Bates, "A New Crowd Challenges the Agenda of the Old Guard in the

The NAACP survived the federal government's attack on the Black Liberation Struggle and its leading socio-political organizations. Social movement theorist Steven Valocchi suggested that the NAACP was able to remain active within the black socio-political landscape after World War II because the organization successfully presented integration to the federal government as a tolerable alternative to the more radical socialist and communist visions of black liberation. The NAACP successfully navigated Cold War political repression because its moderate reputation ensured the continued financial support of white liberal philanthropists and because the organization actively sought to build a working relationship with the White House. Jazz music played an important role in helping the NAACP cultivate relationships with the Nation's chief executives. The NAACP mobilized jazz as a method of proving its loyalty to the nation and its democratic principles. Second, and closely related to the first point, the domestic Cold War political climate induced African American socio-political organizations still able to gain access to jazz too mobilize the music in new ways. As a consequence of the Cold War the NAACP's pre-WWII cultural propaganda strategy, which had relied on Ellington's image, shifted from using Ellington as a leading example of race progress to invoking Ellington's actions as evidence of black America's support for American democracy.<sup>206</sup>

Finally, and perhaps most telling about the Cold War's influence upon the Black Liberation Struggle was the federal government's co-optation of jazz as a political

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NAACP, 1933-1941," *American Historical Review* 102, No. 2 (April 1997), 340-377, 341-2; Josh Sides, "'You Understand My Condition': The Civil Rights Congress in the Los Angeles African-American Community, 1946-1952," *Pacific Historical Review* 67, No. 2 (May 1998), 233-257, 233-5; Murali Balaji, *The Professor and the Pupil: The Politics of W.E.B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson* (New York: Nation Books, 2007), 201-207; For a complete analysis of the CRC see Gerald Horne, *Communist Front? The Civil Rights Congress, 1946-56* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1987), 13, 354-358.

<sup>206</sup> Steven Valocchi, "The Emergence of Integrationist Ideology in the Civil Rights Movement," *Social Problems* 43, No. 1 (February 1996), 116-130, 118.

resource by way of the Eisenhower administrations' Jazz Ambassador Program. Organized in 1955 and operated by the State Department, the Jazz Ambassador Program sent some of America's most respected and well known African American jazz bands to contested Cold War geography in an effort to convince inhabitants of these areas that American styled, interracial harmony, democracy held the best hope for their future. During the 1920s and 1930s jazz had been used within the Black Liberation Struggle to challenge the racial oppression of African Americans within the United States. Ironically, in the mid-1950s the federal government had taken this valuable political resource to propagandize that racial oppression within America did not exist. The government's co-optation of jazz was another strong example of the Cold War's influence in narrowing and redirecting the struggle.<sup>207</sup>

One of the key factors compelling commercially successful jazz musicians to withdraw consent from radical organizations attempting to mobilize their music was the fact that African American artists became the targets of Cold War repression. Before WWII jazz musicians did not have to place their livelihoods at risk in their willingness to participate in African American political activity. In the Cold War era, however, cultural producers faced the threat of financial backlash as a result of contributing to the efforts of leaders and organizations with anti-communist targets on their backs. Musicians like Ellington watched as the media and federal government politically attacked and made examples of several prominent, well-regarded figures within the jazz community.

In 1950 jazz vocalist Lena Horne was listed as a political subversive in *Red Channels*, an anti-communist publication distributed to media outlets designed to identify

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<sup>207</sup> Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

communist supporters and sympathizers, for her association with left wing organizations including Paul Robeson's and W.E.B. DuBois' Council on African Affairs. Horne was blacklisted from television and radio during the early 1950s as a result. Barney Josephson, owner and operator of Greenwich Village's Café Society jazz club, was forced to sell his business in 1949 as a consequence of a federal investigation of his and the club's ties to subversive organizations. The Federal Bureau of Investigation believed that the club was a communist front operation. The bureau suspected that the Communist Party had provided Josephson with the initial seed money used to start the club and shared in the financial profits the club generated. As roomer of the investigation spread patronage of the club and its resulting profits waned, and Josephson was no longer able to maintain the business. The following year the federal government confiscated Josephson's passport.<sup>208</sup>

The State Department revoked actor, concert singer, scholar, and politically outspoken critic of racial oppression Paul Robeson's passport in 1950 as a reaction to Robeson's communist sympathies. During the height of the Harlem Renaissance era Robeson had been an advocate of black cultural nationalism. Robeson dedicated his artistic and intellectual abilities to the project of creating a strong sense of cultural nationalism among black Americans, structured upon their shared African heritage and black American folkways, that could be passed down from one generation to the next as cultural tradition. Robeson's political perspective expanded during the 1930s while living in London when his understanding of social, political, and economic oppression became increasingly shaped by socialist ideology. His comparative studies of the folk

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<sup>208</sup> David W. Stowe, "The Politics of Café Society," *The Journal of American History* 84, No. 4 (March 1998), 1384-1406, 1396-1398, 1404.



music of other cultures, including Chinese, Russian, and Hebrew, illuminated the connections between black Americans and other oppressed and marginalized people around the world. Informed by this insight, Robeson increasingly began to view socialism as a mechanism for achieving racial advancement for blacks within the United States in the same way that socialism had rapidly elevated the conditions of Eastern Europe's marginalized ethnic groups under the influence of the Soviet Union. As tension between the United States and the Soviet Union mounted during the first years of the Cold War Robeson did not shy from openly supporting the Soviet Union and its communist leadership.<sup>209</sup>

Robeson's political activism isolated him from the jazz community in some instances. Robeson was actively involved with communist supported and communist sympathetic organizations like the National Negro Labor Congress, the Council on African Affairs (CAA), and the CRC. Robeson performed for benefit shows for the latter. An August 1949 Robeson CRC benefit show held in New York's Westchester County ended with a violent anti-CRC and anti-Robeson riot.<sup>210</sup> Jazz journalist and political activists Nat Hentoff recalled an instance when Robeson came to hear Dizzy Gillespie's band perform at the Apollo Theatre. According to Hentoff, when Gillespie learned that Robeson was in the audience the trumpeter hoped that Robeson would come back stage to visit. Robeson, however, chose to avoid direct contact with the modern jazz

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<sup>209</sup> Sterling Stuckey, "'I Want to Be African': Paul Robeson and the Ends of Nationalist Theory and Practice, 1914-1945," *Massachusetts Review* 17, No. 1 (Spring 1976), 81-138, 81-2, 108-9, 117; Sterling Stuckey, "Paul Robeson's *Here I Stand*," *Going Through the Storm: The Influence of African American Art in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 228-238, 231.

<sup>210</sup> Rebecca Welch, "Spokesman of the Oppressed? Lorraine Hansberry at Work: The Challenge of Radical Politics in the Postwar Era," *Souls* 9, No. 4 (2007), 302-319, 306; "Outdoor Concert Features Robeson," *New York Amsterdam News*, 13 August 1949, 13; "The Peekskill Riot," *New York Amsterdam News*, 17 September 1949, 18.

pioneer to avoid, as Hentoff put it, getting Dizzy “in trouble.”<sup>211</sup> Historian Barbara J. Beeching took note of the limited discussion of the Robeson passport confiscation within the major African American newspapers. Beeching argued that the black press’s silence and ambiguity regarding coverage of the State Department’s actions against Robeson was a consequence of the constrictions placed around the African American public voice during the Cold War. Hoover’s FBI had cautioned the black press during the early years of World War II against publishing articles and editorials, like those regarding the *Pittsburg Courier’s* “Double-V Campaign,” that could potentially ignite the African American masses and call attention to the nation’s racial unrest.<sup>212</sup>

The State Department and FBI also set their sights upon jazz singer and performer Josephine Baker who used her status as an international celebrity to call attention to America’s race problem before international audiences while on tour. By 1949, as Dudziak has noted, U.S. race relations were increasingly becoming a cornerstone of Soviet Anti-American propaganda, and in that context Baker’s words and actions were damaging to U.S. interests. Compared to Robeson, the State Department and FBI were more limited in the actions that could take against Baker. The popular singer traveled with a French passport. They instead used their connections to pressure international booking agents to cancel Baker’s performances and in 1953, directed Cuban military police to detain and interrogate Baker in Havana for three hours. Between 1954 and 1955 Baker was barred from entering the United States. Both the Robeson and Baker controversies highlighted the growing division among African American leaders that

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<sup>211</sup> Interview with Nat Hentoff, Jazz Oral History Program Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

<sup>212</sup> Barbara J. Beeching, “Paul Robeson and the Black Press: The 1950 Passport Controversy,” *Journal of African American History* 87 (Summer 2002), 339-354, 340-343.

Cold War domestic politics fostered. NAACP Executive Secretary Walter White and Harlem Congressman Adam Clayton Powell publically condemned the words and actions of Robeson and Baker, respectively.<sup>213</sup>

The NAACP launched its own internal campaign to purge suspected communists and communist sympathizers from the organization's ranks in an attempt to hedge against becoming a target of the Red Scare itself. Thanks to the energy of Ella Baker the civil rights organization had considerably grown in size during World War II. Baker joined the organization in 1940 as an Assistant Field Secretary and was promoted to Director of Branches in 1943. Baker's charisma, tactical approach, and her personal appeal to ordinary African Americans are credited for the NAACP's growth in membership during her tenure. In 1941 for instance, Baker's efforts expanded the Richmond, Virginia chapter by 1,500 members in two weeks. Baker notably forged working relations with the labor movement as a part of her strategy in growing the NAACP. She reached out to the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and supported the labor organization's efforts to organize shipyard workers in Newport News, Virginia between 1942 and 1943. Historian Barbara Ransby has suggested that Baker effectively linked the agendas of both the NAACP and the CIO through her support of CIO activities. Historian Gerald Horne has likewise highlighted the significance of the NAACP's ties to the CIO during the Second World War. The NAACP's relationship with the CIO placed the organization in jeopardy. Horne noted, "Consequently, the NAACP was an unblinking ally of the early target of the Red Scare – The CIO." Questions regarding NAACP membership surfaced in the loyalty tests given to African American federal workers; a consequence of President

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<sup>213</sup> Mary L. Dudziak, "Josephine Baker, Racial Protest, and the Cold War," *Journal of American History* 81. No. 2 (September 1994), 543-570, 555-565.

Truman's Executive Order 9806 designed to weed out federal workers with questionable national loyalty.<sup>214</sup>

W.E.B. DuBois, who rejoined the NAACP in 1944 as the Director of Special Research, quickly became another Cold War liability for the organization. DuBois' public friendship with Paul Robeson, his staunch commitment to anti-colonialism and pan-Africanism, his contributions to communist-based media outlets like *New Masses* and *The Daily Worker*, and his support of progressive Henry Wallace's 1948 Presidential campaign caught the attention and concern of the NAACP's board and executive leadership. DuBois linked the NAACP to politically radical circles, the type of connection that the longstanding civil rights organization hoped to avoid. By 1948 DuBois had exposed the NAACP to too much risk. In September 1948 the *New York Times* published an article based on a leaked memo written by DuBois in which he sharply criticized Truman's imperialist Cold War foreign policy. Three days later the NAACP board of directors voted the long-time civil rights activist out of the organization he helped create. Like Robeson, the State Department also denied DuBois a passport in 1952.<sup>215</sup>

The Red Scare and fear of consequences of being labeled an ally of communism likewise constricted the political mobilization of jazz music. Jazz musicians that once willingly lent their craft to support the political work of communist-based organizations and labor unions before WWII consciously distanced themselves from the party as the

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<sup>214</sup> Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2003), 115-117, 132-133; Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W.E.B. DuBois and the African American Response to the Cold War, 1944-1980* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 1, 23, 49; Sundiata Kieta Cha-Jua, Clarence Lang, "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies," *Journal of African American History* 92, No. 2 (Spring 2007), 265-288, 271.

<sup>215</sup> Horne, *Black and Red*, 51, 102-104.

Cold War developed; Duke Ellington included. Ellington's national loyalty was never scrutinized in the way that entertainers like Robeson's and Baker's were, but an advertisement in *The Daily Worker* listing Ellington as a signatory of the Stockholm Peace Petition, a communist-sponsored appeal for the nuclear disarmament of world powers directed at the United States, and displaying the composer's image, compelled journalist Frederick Woltman to seek clarification in regard to where Ellington's alliances rested. Woltman interviewed the aristocrat of jazz between shows while Ellington was performing at Buffalo's Paramount Theater. Ellington explained that a Swedish student burst into his hotel room while he was in the midst of composing. Ellington's uninvited visitor had come to convince him to sign the petition. Ellington offered Woltman the same response that he gave the student, that he thought the petition was conceptually, "ridiculous and stupid – if both countries have the atom bomb what the hell good was a piece of paper going to do." When the student rebutted by calling the names of other prominent leaders that had agreed to sign, Ellington threw the student out of his room. Ellington speculated that *The Daily Worker* included his name as payback for his rudeness. Woltman assured readers that Ellington's connection to what he described as the "Soviet-concocted world peace drive" was a big misunderstanding. Ellington, the journalist proudly proclaimed, "can spot a commie front four blocks away and around the corner..."<sup>216</sup>

The *New York Amsterdam News* also picked up coverage of the controversy between Ellington and the organizers of the Stockholm Peace Petition. Whether or not

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<sup>216</sup> Frederick Woltman, "Duke Ellington Gets Hot Over Red Tune that he Signed Peace Petition," Newspaper title and publication date unknown, Ellington Scrap Book, Duke Ellington Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1997), 317-318, 335.

one of black America's most celebrated cultural leaders had ties to communism was definitely newsworthy, especially in a Cold War climate in which entertainers were not exempt from political repression. Like Woltman's article, the piece in the *Amsterdam News* provided Ellington with another media outlet in which he could publicly reject the notion that he sympathized with communist-inspired goals and objectives. The *Amsterdam News* informed the public that Ellington had recently written an article concerning the unauthorized use of his name by the petition's organizers that was published in the September issue of the liberal anti-communist *New Leader*. Summarizing Ellington's piece in *New Leader*, the *Amsterdam News* reported that Ellington intended to sue the petition's organizers if they failed to remove his name from their literature within forty-eight hours of the publication of *New Leader's* September issue. The *Amsterdam News* also gave the public another opportunity to read the statement regarding political activism that Ellington published in *New Leader*,

I, personally, fare far better as a member of my minority than any member of any other minority I've seen in any country...Sure, the situation of the Negro isn't what it should be...But if I can contribute toward improving it, it won't be in the form of signing any petitions...As anyone knows who has followed my career, movements of a political nature – Stockholm movements or Moscow movements – any kind but orchestral movements – have never been a part of my life.<sup>217</sup>

Ellington in effect re-wrote portions of his career history, especially in regard to the political work that his music had performed during the last three decades. Not only had Ellington's music supported the political activities of the BSCP and NAACP, the latter actively using Ellington's jazz as a political resource at the time of the controversy, it had played a role in the activities of CPUSA as well. Ellington must have hoped that no one

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<sup>217</sup> "Ellington Warns Reds In Peace Movement," *New York Amsterdam News*, 30 September 1950, 2, 23 (quoted from *New Leader*, September 1930).

had followed his career too closely. He tried to craft an apolitical image of himself and his music as a consequence of the Cold War's domestic political climate. Career survival depended upon this strategic public relations move, especially in light of what was transpiring with Robeson and Baker.

The NAACP continued to mobilize jazz music, via Ellington, during the early years of the Cold War. The expanding civil rights organization continued to use jazz primarily as a fundraising resource. Ellington's image and persona however, evolved from being used as an example of race progress into a symbol of the interracial unity that American democracy offered, a convenient retooling of Ellington's political value for the time. Ellington's benefit concerts more importantly offered the NAACP a new tactical approach in fostering a working relationship with the Truman administration. The NAACP used Ellington as an inroad into the White House. Ellington, for instance, sent a letter to President and Mrs. Truman personally inviting them to the NAACP benefit concert held January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1951 at the New York City Metropolitan Opera House. While the first couple did not attend the event Ellington did receive a response from the White House stating, "The President was glad to hear about your concert in behalf of the NAACP, and fully appreciates its importance and the stature of the people who will be connected with it." Ellington provided another means for the NAACP to remain on the White House's radar; a service for which the organization was appreciative. Arthur Spingarn, President of the NAACP board, presented Ellington with a scroll of honor at the January 1951 opera house benefit "In appreciation of his extraordinary achievements as an artist and as an international and interracial ambassador of goodwill."<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Letter from White House to Duke Ellington, 12/11/1950, Duke Ellington Collection; Ellington Scroll of Honor, Duke Ellington Collection.

It did not take the federal government long to recognize the political value of mobilizing jazz music and musicians as “international and interracial ambassadors of goodwill.” In 1955 the Eisenhower administration organized and launched the Jazz Ambassador Program. The United States used jazz music as a valuable tool in spreading the influence of American democracy across contested Cold War political geography. The United States had again co-opted the political power of jazz music. Ellington and other jazz musicians’ aid in selling war bonds during the Double-V campaign established the precedent for the government to do so. Between 1955 and 1969 bands led by Dizzy Gillespie, Benny Goodman, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Dave Brubeck, and others used jazz to plant the seeds of productive relations between the United States and emerging independent nations throughout the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe. Historian Penny Von Eschen argued that, “In the high-profile tours by Gillespie, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and many others, U.S. officials pursued a self-conscious campaign against worldwide criticism of U.S. racism, striving to build cordial relations with new African and Asian states” and that, “...U.S. officials would simultaneously insist on the universal race-transcending quality of jazz while depending on the blackness of musicians to legitimize America’s global agendas...”. Indeed, in a Cold War climate where the Soviet Union increasingly relied upon instances of racial discrimination as anti-American propaganda, the image of successful African American musicians served as a powerful counterbalance to the negative messages regarding race relations within the United States.<sup>219</sup>

In addition to providing international audiences evidence that African Americans’ potential for success was not limited by racial oppression jazz music also possessed the

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<sup>219</sup> Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 4.



power to reach into the communist soul. Its value in this regard was demonstrated as early as 1950, during Ellington's first post WWII tour through Germany. A correspondent reporting on the success of a sold-out June 1950 Ellington performance at the Apollo Theater in Dusseldorf recognized a communist youth leader who had helped break up an unauthorized political rally the night before. The young communist became "frightened and embarrassed" after being recognized among the 2,000 patrons turned away from the Apollo's door. Jazz was taboo for those receiving directives from behind the Iron Curtain. Apparently communist officials were no more successful in turning listeners against jazz than the Nazi's who controlled Germany before the end of the war had been. The journalist reported that a few German fans told Ellington that they served time in a Nazi jail for listening to his records, while other German jazz lovers rowed canoes equipped with gramophones to the center of a lake for 'sneaking sessions.'<sup>220</sup>

Harlem Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, married to jazz pianist Hazel Scott, first proposed the idea of the Jazz Ambassador Program to President Eisenhower. The program was funded through Eisenhower's "President's emergency fund" and managed through the State Department. John Wilson, jazz writer for the *New York Times*, and Marshall Stearns, head of Rutgers University's Institute of Jazz Studies and Literature Professor at Hunter College, led the musician selection committee. Dizzy Gillespie's band was the first to travel abroad under the auspices of the State Department. Its racial and gender diversity made the musical aggregate a fitting first choice. In 1956 the band, accompanied by Stearns and State Department officials, used jazz to acquaint listeners in

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<sup>220</sup> "Hitler's Campaign Failed to Stamp Out Love for Jazz," Newspaper and date unknown, Duke Ellington Scrap Book (Microfilm Roll 1/Vol.1), Duke Ellington Collection; The article was mostly likely based upon Ellington's June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1950 performance at the Apollo Theatre in Dusseldorf, Germany as documented in Ken Vail, *Duke's Diary: Part 1: The Life of Duke Ellington, 1927-1950* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 367.

the Middle East and Latin America with capitalism and democracy. In addition to providing both visual and aural evidence of the attributes of America's interracial democracy the Jazz Ambassador Program also helped institutionalize the jazz tradition. A stylistically diverse range of musicians and bands performed overseas over the course of the program's thirteen year run. The authority of the federal government bound Gillespie's bebop with Armstrong's New Orleans jazz, Ellington and Goodman's big band swing, and later Brubeck's cool jazz, all within the genre of jazz. The program marked a significant signpost in the shift from factious debate to consensus regarding bebop's relationship to earlier styles.<sup>221</sup>

While the Cold War was narrowing jazz's connections to the Black Liberation Struggle a new generation of musicians were actively expanding the stylistic boundaries of the music. The birth of modern jazz predated the beginning of the Cold War and is considered a watershed moment in the music's historical development. The style's creation has been reified as a part of the music's historical mythology. Modern jazz did not instantaneously materialize but slowly congealed between 1942 and 1945. The music's stylistic characteristics were negotiated during the many after-hours jam sessions taking place within Harlem's black musical community, most notably at Minton's Playhouse and Monroe's Uptown House. The new music was the product of the creative imaginations of a young generation of African American musicians. During these late night jam sessions musicians would rotate on and off the bandstand and, through a series of musical duels across imaginative keys and chord progressions, they collectively sketched the blueprint for a new musical style. Twelve bar phrases replaces swords

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<sup>221</sup> Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up The World*, 2-4, 18, 32-40; John Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool: Jazz and its Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 119, 151; for a complete chart of the tours conducted by the Jazz Ambassador Program see Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 124-125.

during the cutting contests initiated during these jam sessions, the bandstand often becoming a musical battlefield.

Musicians including Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Kenny Clark, Charlie Christian, Thelonious Monk, Max Roach, and Bud Powell, men who Amiri Baraka called “sound scientists”, set the pace for the “...new learning of Bebop from the black laboratories of Minton’s and the all-night jam sessions....”.<sup>222</sup> The new style’s creators generally referred to the new music as “modern jazz,” reflective of both the America in which they lived and their conscious effort to develop a new sound capable of replacing the relatively antiquated jazz of the preceding generation and the staled African American racial stereotypes accompanying that music.

The collaborative jam sessions that led to the development of modern jazz initially took place beyond the ears of the listening public. Musicians were largely performing for an audience of other musicians in these jam session environments. As interest in the sessions at Minton’s and Monroe’s grew beyond Harlem’s community of musicians, first by rare record collectors and jazz aficionados, bebop’s epicenter shifted from Harlem to the famed 52<sup>nd</sup> Street in midtown Manhattan. Non-musician listeners were attracted by the opportunity to listen to musical innovation in the relaxed and low-key setting jam session culture fostered. 52<sup>nd</sup> Street venues including the Onxy and Kelly’s Stable, comparable to brownstone basement speakeasies in size and feel, usurped Minton’s and Monroe’s as key performance venues.

New York City’s race politics contributed to the shift in locales. White Americans were generally becoming increasingly wary about venturing uptown for

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<sup>222</sup> Amiri Baraka, *Digging: The Afro-American Soul of American Classical Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 10.

musical entertainment in the wake of the 1935 Harlem Riot. The racial unrest in New York during the early 1940s intensified their concerns. 52<sup>nd</sup> Street club owners' willingness to pay these young musicians local union scale was the other major factor contributing to modern jazz's move to midtown. Musicians had not earned any pay performing at Minton's since they were informally performing before an audience of other musicians. Minton's operated more like a musician's social club than a performance venue catering to a listening public. The opportunity to earn money virtually doing the same thing they had done at Minton's motivated musicians like Gillespie to make the short trip to midtown.<sup>223</sup> As interest in modern jazz continued to grow among listening audiences and the press the new style earned a new name. According to modern jazz pioneer Kenny Clarke the term "bebop" derived from the onomatopoeic sound of the style's percussive accents and was popularized by the press. Musicians had only referred to the style as "that music they're playing up at Minton's."<sup>224</sup> By 1945 bebop, by way of the Dizzy Gillespie Quintet featuring Charlie Parker had earned enough credibility among audiences to be performed at New York City's Town Hall.<sup>225</sup>

While the musical ideas that gave shape to bebop actually pre-dated the early 1940s, the social and economic conditions of World War II America and after created the space and opportunity for those ideas to become much more. Jazz Historian Scott DeVeaux, assessing the contextual impetus for modern jazz's development surmised,

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<sup>223</sup> Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 229.

<sup>224</sup> Arthur Taylor, "Interview with Kenny Clark," *Notes and Tones: Musician-to-Musician Interviews* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 189-196, 194.

<sup>225</sup> Dizzy Gillespie, *Dizzy Gillespie Charlie Parker: Town Hall, New York City, June 22, 1945*, Uptown Jazz UPCD 27.51.

The particular form that bebop took, in short, resulted from the explosive combination of broad economic opportunity with the realities of racial inequality. The music industry gathered young musicians of extraordinary skill together from across the country and gathered them in New York City. Racial inequality ensured that their efforts would be unrewarded and their talents would go underutilized. The peculiar dynamics of the jam session suggested a new shape and purpose for their intellectual and artistic aspirations. Without those circumstances, it is unlikely that there would have been a bebop movement.<sup>226</sup>

The young bebop pioneers had gravitated towards New York during the mid to late 1930s to take advantage of opportunities to join the major African American big bands headquartered in the city as sidemen and soloists. Within a few years of reaching the profession's highest rungs, work opportunities for African American musicians were becoming increasingly scarce. Racial discrimination barred African American musicians from extended residencies in the major hotels and theaters located outside of Harlem, whose entertainment economy, once the rage among white adventure seekers, was in decline. Discrimination also blocked access to lucrative work performing in the house orchestras of the major broadcast networks. African American bands were limited to earning income through extensive tours filled with one-night engagements across the country in this economic climate. The outbreak of World War II and United States policy decisions to prepare the nation for war-time production eroded the one major opportunity to which black bands had access. The War Industries Board's restrictions on the use of rubber and gasoline for commercial use significantly effected African American bands' ability to travel, which had been primarily done by bus. Many musicians were left grounded in New York as a result. Without prospects for steady work, jamming informally with one another was a productive way to keep their chops sharp.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 171.

<sup>227</sup> DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 240-244.

The new style quickly became a subject of intense debate among musicians, critics, and jazz audiences. The conflicts between the bebop jazzmen and women and their musical forbearers regarding the aesthetic value of the new music, and the debates among jazz critics supporting the artistic visions of each camp of musicians have been well documented. It was not forgotten that Louis Armstrong believed that the anger and unyielding stubbornness of young beboppers and their insistence on playing what he considered “weird chords” was drying up live performance work within New York. Critics opposed to bebop openly chastised the “inaccessibility and undanceability of the music,” not to mention the odd wardrobe and habitual drug use of a few of the styles’ greatest innovators.<sup>228</sup> Many of modern jazz’s leading musicians responded to criticism with an attitude of indifference, often stating “I don’t care if you like to listen to my music or not.”<sup>229</sup>

Despite the conflicts that bebop’s presence within the jazz world triggered, individuals on both sides quickly realized the value of forging a compromise. Scott DeVeaux has described their efforts to negotiate a middle ground as an effort to maintain the consciously crafted “jazz tradition.” The jazz tradition was actually a product of the 1930s and resolved tensions among jazz critics caused by the rise of commercially popular big band swing along side of the established New Orleans style jazz. Many of the arguments revolved around how swing should be categorized as a musical genre. The jazz tradition became the brokered solution to critics’ dilemma; DeVeaux suggested,

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<sup>228</sup> “‘Bop Will Kill Business Unless it Kills Itself First’ – Louis Armstrong,” *Down Beat*, 7 April 1948, 2-3; Bernard Gendron, “‘Moldy Figs’ and Modernists: Jazz at War (1942-1946),” *Jazz Among the Discourses*, ed. Krin Gabbard (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 31-56, 32.

<sup>229</sup> Amiri Baraka recalled in *Blues People* that musicians including Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, and Thelonius Monk were quoted as saying “I don’t care if you like my music or not,” *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: Quill, 1999), 188.

“The concept of a jazz tradition with an honorable past and a hopeful future began to emerge as a useful compromise, with the term jazz now covering both the original ‘hot jazz’ of the 1920s and the swing of the 1930s.”<sup>230</sup> The jazz tradition provided jazz critics with a convenient framework for joining different styles of African American originated music under the umbrella label “jazz.” The concept of evolution, in terms of musical growth and development, was the bolt holding the jazz tradition framework together. The musical characteristics that hot New Orleans Jazz and Swing shared were foreground in critics’ discussion as the evidence of one style evolving into the next.

When modern jazz sparked debates and divided musicians and critics into pro-modern and pro-traditional camps, respectively called progressives and moldy figs, in the 1940s the jazz tradition was already in place as a method of quickly reconciling the two opposing positions. The shared characteristic of improvisation and a focus on lineages of creative influence from one generation of musicians to the next bound New Orleans jazz, swing, and bebop in a neat line of linear evolution within the jazz genre, despite their significantly different sounds and performance styles. Musicians like Armstrong and Gillespie, initially at odds, were both able to extract value from the compromise the jazz tradition represented. The jazz tradition gave bebop a historical grounding, which added legitimacy to Gillespie’s ambitions to present bebop as a high art music. The jazz tradition likewise affirmed and reified the cultural importance of Armstrong’s New Orleans jazz as it became an integral step in the creation of high art music. In other words, one could not appreciate the artistic significance of bebop without

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<sup>230</sup> Scott DeVeaux, “Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography,” *Black American Literature Forum* 25, No. 3 Literature of Jazz Issue (Autumn 1991), 525-560, 537.

first understanding the aesthetics of New Orleans jazz and swing. In many ways the jazz tradition tamed bebop's revolutionary impulse from a musicological standpoint.<sup>231</sup>

The rise of bebop has also been interpreted as evidence of a revolution in African American socio-political consciousness, specifically among African American musicians. DeVeaux also argued that, "If any movement within jazz can be said to reflect and embody the political tensions of its time – the aspirations, frustrations, and subversive sensibilities of an elite group of African American artists during a time of upheaval and rapid change -, it is the musical revolution that took shape during and after the Second World War."<sup>232</sup> Historian Eric Lott suggested that bebop arose as a musical response to the national African American political climate, influenced by the Double-V strategy, the growth of civil rights organizations, a heightening labor consciousness, and Harlem's local political climate, shaped by a violent 1943 race riot reminding residents of the threat of police brutality and its consequences. The music's double time tempo, according to Lott, was reflective of the rapid changes taking place within American society and that the new sound "...made it possible to keep playing jazz in the face of given musical and social facts without losing self-respect."<sup>233</sup> While acknowledging the fact that the men and women at the musical forefront of the bebop revolution did not approach the development of modern jazz as a political project, jazz historian Eric Porter more broadly suggested that, "The music may not have represented a particular, class-specific ideological stance, but it did reflect changing orientations and perspectives among

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<sup>231</sup> DeVeaux, "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography," 538-539.

<sup>232</sup> DeVeaux, 542.

<sup>233</sup> Eric Lott, "Double V. Double Time: Bebop's Politics of Style," *Callaloo* 36 (Summer 1988), 597-605, 597, 601.



working-class and middle-class African Americans, especially black youth and young adults.<sup>234</sup>

Discussing the relationship between the creation of modern jazz and black political activism Dizzy Gillespie commented that, “We didn’t go out and make speeches or say, ‘Let’s play eight bars of protest.’ We just played our music and let it go at that. The music proclaimed our identity; it made every statement we truly wanted to make.”<sup>235</sup> While not directly political, the creation of modern jazz, as Gillespie suggested, gave a rising generation of musicians an opportunity to recast the listening public’s racialized perceptions of black musicians. The music’s technical complexity and sophistication, and the intellectual seriousness in which black musicians approached composing and performing the music, demanded that audiences desiring to consume black musical performances within the context of comedic entertainment using racial stereotypes as punch lines rethink the performance expectations they placed upon black jazz musicians. The African American jazzmen and women at the forefront of the bebop revolution successfully used modern jazz to liberate the black musician’s identity from the shadows of the minstrel tradition.<sup>236</sup>

As popular interest in modern jazz grew during the mid-1940s the music’s rebellious spirit was adopted by a young generation of African American listeners. Bebop became the soundtrack of their socio-cultural revolt from racial oppression at large. The music provided the rhythm and pulse for a new construction of black identity that was characterized by the use of coded jive language and zoot suit fashion.

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<sup>234</sup> Eric Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 55-57.

<sup>235</sup> As quoted in Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?*, 58-59.

<sup>236</sup> Porter, 72; Paul Lopes, *Rise of a Jazz Art World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 204-207.

Discussing the socio-political significance of African Americans' decisions to wear zoot suites Historian Robin Kelley argued that, "While the suit itself was not meant as a direct political statement, the social context in which it was created and worn rendered it so. The language and culture of zoot suiters represented a subversive refusal to be subservient."<sup>237</sup> Bebop, quite literally, became a language African Americans used to voice their resistance to continued racial oppression during the years surrounding World War II. Vibraphonist Lionel Hampton said in a 1946 interview, "Whenever I see any injustice or unfair treatment against my own race or any other minority groups 'Hey Ba Ba Rebo' stimulates the desire to destroy such prejudice and discrimination."<sup>238</sup> Harlemitte Jesse B. Semple, the World War II era working class manifestation of Langston Hughes' creative consciousness, shared Hampton's sentiment. Bop, according to Semple, came from the police. "Bop" was the musical imitation of the sounds resonating from police clubs bouncing off of black heads. Semple, in one of his many imaginary yet realistic conversations with Hughes, remarked, "That's where Be-Bop came from, beaten right out of some Negro's head into them horns and saxophones and piano keys that plays it."<sup>239</sup> Bebop became a socio-political response to African Americans' encounters with instances of racial discrimination. While the new music was not directly mobilized as a resource by black political organizations and activists during World War II or the opening years of the Cold War, modern jazz and its social meaning greatly informed the ways in which jazz music would soon be called upon by

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<sup>237</sup> Robin D.G. Kelley, "The Riddle of the Zoot: Malcolm Little and Black Cultural Politics During World War II," *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth Century America*, ed. Joe Austin and Michael Nevin Willard (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 155-182, 160.

<sup>238</sup> As quoted in Lott, "Double V. Double Time: Bebop's Politics of Style," 603.

<sup>239</sup> Langston Hughes, "Bop," *The Best of Simple* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), 117-119, 118.

organizations and activists participating in the next wave of liberation struggle activism growing out of the Cold War as the following chapter will discuss.

One of the more understudied aspects of the “bebop revolution” is how the listening segment of the jazz community reacted to the new modern jazz sound. Understanding how listening audiences responded to jazz amid the genre’s growing stylistic diversity during the 1940s and beyond is an important part of appreciating jazz music’s continued value as a political resource. The music’s political value before World War II was, after all, based upon its commercial appeal. Organizations like the NAACP, CPUSA, and BSCP mobilized the music of the Ellington Orchestra and other bands because of their ability to attract audiences. Remaining cognizant of audiences’ stylistic interests within the jazz genre, and the social meanings audiences assigned to new styles, will better contextualize how African American socio-political activists and organization, apart of the audience themselves, approached the mobilization of jazz, especially as the strategies and tactics of the struggle were continually changing during the latter half of the twentieth century.

Many historians agree that the jazz audience, accustomed to listening and dancing to big band jazz, never fully gravitated to the new jazz style. Ian Anderson noted that, “Much of the public viewed bebop as a complex form, on account of its subculture as much as its musical style.”<sup>240</sup> Some jazz fans were alienated by the style’s rapid pace and improvisational intricacies, others were at odds with the hipster cultural dynamics—the language, fashion, attitude, and perceived drug use—surrounding the new style. The first members of the jazz audience to express interest in bebop, beyond other musicians, were

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<sup>240</sup> Ian Anderson, *This Is Our Music: Free Jazz, the Sixties, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 6.

the self-described jazz aficionados and connoisseurs. Largely comprised of white male, college educated, middle and upper class individuals, these “jazz enthusiasts,” as Paul Lopes called them, increasingly recognized jazz as an art form and worked to foster a “jazz art world,” in which the music received “serious appreciation and patronage.”<sup>241</sup> White male jazz enthusiasts cultivated a thriving jazz record collecting culture in the 1930s and 1940s. These record collectors were the driving force behind bebop’s migration from Harlem to the brownstone speakeasies of 52<sup>nd</sup> Street. They purchased the tickets to 52<sup>nd</sup> Street performances. A new wave of jazz critics, including the Marshall Sterns and Leonard Feather, who vigorously defended bebop against its detractors, stemmed from this group. Over the course of the 1940s the jazz art world that the “jazz enthusiasts” created grew more diverse as an increasing number affluent, college educated whites, with disposable incomes, became interested in modern jazz, as a high art form. The increasing number of jazz performances taking place on the campuses of majority white college and university campuses fueled the jazz art world’s audience diversification among white listeners.<sup>242</sup>

What affect the bebop revolution had upon audiences for African American music is less clear. Many jazz historians have argued that the rise of bebop, with its fast paced riffs and high art ambitions, alienated the populace of jazz fans from the genre, especially African Americans. Historian Brian Ward suggested that, “Jazz, however, had not been the leading popular music of the black masses since at least the swing of the 1930s,...[jazz] had generally failed to extend itself to the black community in the same way as rhythm & blues.” Mark Anthony Neal explained that the erosion of black interest

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<sup>241</sup> Lopes, *The Rise of a Jazz Art World*, 157.

<sup>242</sup> Lopes, 157-160, 174, 185.

in jazz, within the transition from swing to bebop, was based on the subsequent transformation of jazz from “dance” music to “listening” music.<sup>243</sup>

The introduction of small bebop performance combos along side the previously dominant presence of larger big band swing orchestras, must have forced audiences interested in African American music to expand their perceptions of jazz’s social functions. Both Ward and Neal, however, discount the idea that audiences, especially African Americans, could and did find cultural meaning and social value in the new jazz style. More importantly, arguments suggesting that the emergence of bebop led to the erosion of audiences for jazz at large are methodologically problematic. The difficulty of this line of thought stems from an assumption that each new style of African American music that was labeled jazz supplanted and replaced its predecessor. This assumption is largely a consequence of jazz historiography’s steady adherence to the “jazz tradition” as a framework for interpreting jazz history at-large, and the overwhelming reliance on using the critics’ perspectives in assembling the historical narrative that the jazz tradition framework creates. The jazz tradition is most productive in a more focused analysis of the history of jazz criticism, not the entire social and cultural history of the genre. The jazz tradition, as currently used within jazz historiography, obscures the fact that other styles of jazz were actively performed and consumed alongside modern jazz. In arguing that bebop led to the erosion of the jazz audience historians like Ward and Neal imply that a lack of interest in one style of jazz produced a lack of interest in all styles of jazz.

Reconstructing the voice of the jazz audience during this period is a difficult task because of the lack of evidence. Jazz historian Ian Anderson has called attention to the

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<sup>243</sup> Brian Ward, *Just My Soul Responding* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1998); Mark A. Neal, *What the Music Said*, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 29.

fact that approximately fifty years passed between the 1930s, when big band jazz dominated popular music, and 1982, when the National Endowment of the Arts conducted an extensive demographic analysis of the jazz audience. Our awareness of the scope of the jazz audience, and their perceptions of the music, during this interim fifty-year period is hazy at best. Anderson noted that, “In lieu of quantitative information, music historians rely upon personal testimony and anecdotes to define the jazz audience prior to 1982.” Anderson likewise suggested that historians turn to the observations of musicians, critics, club owners, and others for insight into the jazz audience; a suggestion that this study will take in attempting to understand jazz music’s changing value as a political resource.<sup>244</sup>

If the pages of *Negro Digest* are any indication, there is little question that jazz captured the attention and aroused the interests of music consuming audiences during the 1940s, African Americans included. *Negro Digest* was a Chicago-based monthly periodical that reprinted news and editorials discussing African American life and concerns across a wide spectrum of print media outlets. The magazine makes for an excellent barometer of African American interests of the 1940s. The monthly was published and edited by John H. Johnson, whose Johnson Publishing Company would grow into the dominant force in African American print media over the latter half of the twentieth century. *Negro Digest*, first published in November 1941, was the early flagship of the emerging media giant. The fact that jazz music was discussed in the pages of *Negro Digest*, a popular, mainstream interest magazine, serves as a obvious reminder that jazz listeners at large did not retreat into a cultish subculture, despite critics’ arguments that the fans of a specific jazz style did. Below the publishing credits for each

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<sup>244</sup> Ian Anderson, *This is Our Music*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 125.

issue Johnson reminded readers that, “The articles in *Negro Digest* are selected on the basis of general interest and information...”. Articles and editorials about jazz music were a part of Johnson’s perspective on what types of subject matter would best connect with the “general interests” of his readers. Jazz music’s presence in the periodical suggests that popular interest in jazz, as a whole, did not fade during this period as some historians have suggested. Duke Ellington addressed the perception that the jazz audience was shrinking in a November 1944 *Negro Digest* reprint, commenting that, “I think these last few years have proved that music doesn’t kick up its heels and call it quits under crisis [referring to World War II]. Music is staying by popular request of the fighting men and the folks the left behind.”<sup>245</sup>

Jazz music was indeed discussed relatively frequently in the pages of *Negro Digest* during the 1940s. The articles republished in the magazine focused near exclusively on big band swing jazz for the first seven years of the decade. Ellington’s November 1944 *Negro Digest* article exposed readers to his thoughts on defining swing music as a style and jazz music’s future outlook. The aristocrat of jazz wrote, “Swing, as I like to make it and play it, is an expression of sentiment and ideas – modern ideas. It’s the kind of music that catches the rhythm of the way people feel and live today.”<sup>246</sup> During the first half of the decade *Digest* readers had the opportunity to examine life and career profiles of musicians and band leaders including Cab Calloway, Mary Lou Williams, Cootie Williams, and Louis Armstrong. *Digest* readers were kept abreast of the National Jazz Foundation’s efforts to build a jazz museum in New Orleans and were reminded of the city’s rich jazz history. The magazine’s book review section featured

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<sup>245</sup> Duke Ellington, “Swing is My Beat,” *Negro Digest*, November 1944, 9-11,9.

<sup>246</sup> Ellington, “Swing is My Beat,” 9.

works on jazz during this period, most notably Barry Ulanov's 1946 biography of Duke Ellington. The records reviewed and the musical performances highlighted in each issue centered on big band swing.<sup>247</sup>

There was no mention of bebop in *Negro Digest* until late 1947. Despite its revolutionary entrance onto the jazz scene, the music was slow in catching on in the popular domain, especially outside of its unofficial Manhattan headquarters. Walter Bishop, Jr., a native Harlemit and second-generation bebop pianist, noted that even in Harlem, it took some time for bebop to catch on. According to Bishop, Jr. bebop initially fractured the patrons frequenting Harlem establishments that featured live jazz. Bishop, Jr. observed at Minton's, for instance, that "on the weekend there were two crowds...the bar crowd and the listening crowd." In his mind they were "like two different worlds." Reflecting on the period Bishop, Jr. commented that, "most of the people were not into bebop...most people don't accept change readily." He also noted, however, that the "influence of the music slowly began to take hold."<sup>248</sup>

Bishop, Jr.'s observations of Gillespie's first tour around the country with his bebop big band in 1946 offer an insightful example of an audience's first reaction to the bebop sound and how that sound wore down their initial opposition to it. In 1946 Bishop, Jr. was completing service within the United States Army Air Core and was stationed near St. Louis. The pianist's free time was spent within the mid-western metropolis listening to live jazz at The Riviera, where he had the opportunity to hear Gillespie's

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<sup>247</sup> "Museum in Mahogany Hall," *Negro Digest*, December 1944, 15-16; Dixon Grayer, "His Hi-Di Highness," *Negro Digest*, January 1945, 7-11; Naomi Jolles, "Passion for the Piano," *Negro Digest*, March 1946, 27-29; Louis Armstrong, "Giant of Jazz," *Negro Digest*, March 1946, 51-55; Robert Goffin, "Memories of Congo Square," *Negro Digest*, April 1945, 57-60; "Cootie Clicks," *Negro Digest*, November 1945, 83-86; The review of Ulanov's book *Duke Ellington* appears in the April 1946 issue of *Negro Digest*, 87-97, in which an excerpt from the biography is published.

<sup>248</sup> Interview with Walter Bishop, Jr., Jazz Oral History Program Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.



bebop big band on their first national tour. Bishop, Jr. recalled that when Gillespie band's finished the first set on the first night of their week-long engagement the audience, used to a regional jazz style deeply steeped in the blues, "...sat there with their mouths open, like they were put in the middle of a hurricane." From where he stood towards the back of the room he overheard one waitress say to another in reference to the band, "What is that shit...Can't y'all play no blues." By the end of the week, however, Bishop, Jr. noticed the audience warming towards Gillespie's big band bebop. He observed the same waitresses snapping their fingers to the music's rhythm.<sup>249</sup> According to Gillespie audiences in Hollywood were less open-minded and forgiving. Describing the audience at a popular Hollywood nightclub during the 1946 tour, Gillespie, in an interview with jazz writer Richard O. Boyer, said, "They were *so* hostile out there...they thought we were playing ugly on purpose. They were really *very* square. Man, they used to stare at us *so* tough."<sup>250</sup>

Bebop finally made its way into the pages of *Negro Digest* in the December 1947 issue via a republished *New York Herald Tribune* article by jazz critic and photographer Bill Gottlieb titled, "The Anatomy of Bebop." Aside from explaining the dynamics of bebop and validating the jazz style as a "modern progressive music, harmonically suited to the times," Gottlieb framed its fan base as primarily a youthful sub-cultural group of aspiring musicians. "To Outsiders," Gottlieb suggested, "bebop comes as an unpleasant jolt. With most new listeners attempting to shut off the cacophony by planting their hands over their ears."<sup>251</sup> The discussion of bebop in *Negro Digest* continued in the November 1948 issue. Richard O. Boyer's reprinted *New Yorker* article, taking up

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<sup>249</sup> Interview with Walter Bishop, Jr., Jazz Oral History Program Collection.

<sup>250</sup> Richard O. Boyer, "The Kingdom of Bop," *Negro Digest*, November 1948, 58-70, 61.

<sup>251</sup> Bill Gottlieb, "The Anatomy of Bebop," *Negro Digest*, December 1947, 79-80, 80.

thirteen pages of the *Digest*, greatly expanded the conversation. Boyer's article, based on an interview with Dizzy Gillespie, provided readers of the *New Yorker* and *Negro Digest* an in-depth examination of the cultural and social circumstances shaping the creative imaginations of the musicians. Boyer framed audiences' reception of bebop similar to Gottlieb, suggesting, "Its proponents praise what they call its weird and beautiful chord progressions, whereas its opponents declare that it is meaningless dissonance." Boyer likewise noted that bebop's audience was mostly comprised of white and black youth. In a cult-like description Boyer wrote that, "Dizzy's male fans, most of whom are in their late teens or early twenties, express their adoration for Gillespie by imitating him." Readers of the periodicals learned that Gillespie's young audience mimicked his fashion choices, language, mannerisms, and even his posture.<sup>252</sup>

Boyer's examination of bebop and its unique cultural dynamics prompted responses from several *Negro Digest* readers that were published in its February 1949 issue. Ted Jones, a young bebop musician in Louisville, KY wrote, "In your November issue, you had an article that we the Beboppers had been waiting for," and that "This great progressive jazz story that you printed will help many beboppers. It will also make John Q. Public understand us, and our music."<sup>253</sup> New Yorker Mabel R. Tanksley's response letter revealed a dramatically different interpretation of bebop and its social and cultural significance. Tanksley's letter demonstrated that at least some individuals within the anonymous amalgam known as John Q. Public did not understand Ted Jones and the music he loved to hear and create. Tanksley was in fact quite condemning of bebop's aesthetic quality and social relevance. She viewed beboppers' revolt against earlier jazz

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<sup>252</sup> Boyer, "The Kingdom of Bop," 58-9.

<sup>253</sup> Ted Jones, "Be-Bop: Pro and Con," *Negro Digest*, February 1949, 96.

styles whose performance customs, beboppers argued, portrayed African American identity through the prism of racial stereotypes, as counter-productive to African American integrationist goals. Tanksley likewise viewed beboppers turn to Islam, primarily a shield against the blows of American racial oppression, as a corrosively dangerous development in African Americans' efforts to integrate into white American society. Bebop had no value in Tanksley's mind, especially in regard to African American advancement. She wrote that, "We know that these are not real contributions to our world." Tanksley described Dizzy Gillespie, the source behind Boyer's article, as a "lodestone" around the neck of the race, one that needed to be shaken off. Tanksley closed her letter with an appeal to Johnson and the editorial staff of *Negro Digest*, requesting that, "From now on, please do not print any articles about Dizzy Gillespie. His is phenomenal only as an extreme example of regression in the face of circumstance, not achievement against odds. Be one intelligent Negro who can distinguish between a contribution and a setback." Tanksley suggested that Johnson needed to recalibrate his gage on the public's general interest. Her harsh criticism did not stem from the fact that she was not a jazz fan. She cited actress and jazz singer Lena Horne as a powerful symbol of racial progress and a source of race pride.<sup>254</sup>

The vast differences between Jones and Tanksley's perceptions of bebop demonstrated a rift in African Americans' opinions of the music. L.D. Reddick's, a faculty member at one of Atlanta's historically black colleges, observations of a November 1949 Dizzy Gillespie big band performance held in Atlanta's City Auditorium reflected the divide among African American audiences over bebop. The concert,

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<sup>254</sup> Mabel R. Tanksley, "Be-Bop: Pro and Con," *Negro Digest*, February 1949, 96-97; For additional information on jazz musicians embracement of Islam during this period see Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 147.

Gillespie's first Atlanta performance, was staged by Southeastern Artists, an African American owned and operated talent agency. Gillespie's booking was the agency's second event in which they brought internationally recognized jazz ensembles to the city. Southeastern Artists had introduced Atlantans to the Duke Ellington Orchestra the previous year. Reddick took stock of the audience in attendance for Gillespie's Monday evening show. He noted, with a Marxist gaze, that the vast majority of African Americans there were primarily young, high school age "Dizzy devotees." Reddick only noticed the presence of a few African American university students, who in his interpretation "generally pass [bebop] up." Reddick did not see any of his faculty counterparts or any of the city's elite African American professionals or entrepreneurs at the event.<sup>255</sup>

Reddick suggested that the young, working class skew within the African American audience was a consequence of the bourgeois cultural preferences of Atlanta's black middle class. The skew may also have been a result of the event's press coverage. Atlanta's African American newspaper, *The Daily World*, in the days leading up to the concert characterized Gillespie as "unusual" before its readership and specifically described his music as something that would only interest audiences desiring to "sit down and listen" to jazz. Portions of the mainstream African American jazz audience may have been dissuaded from attending the event after seeing Gillespie and the performance characterized in these ways. Southeastern Artists' advertisements for the event may have been a factor contributing to the large number of "Dizzy devotees" in attendance. One of the agency's ads told potential patrons that those arriving at the gate outfitted in

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<sup>255</sup> L.D. Reddick, "Persons and Places: Dizzy Gillespie in Atlanta," *Phylon* 10, No. 1, (First Quarter, 1949), 44-49, 45.

Gillespie's signature glasses, beret, and goatee would receive a thirty-three percent discount in the admissions price, reducing a \$1.50 dollar ticket to \$1.00 dollar even. Reddick ultimately noticed that the entire audience, including the whites in attendance that he described as the "Persian-lamb-mink-coat gang" was only large enough to fill half of the venue. Perhaps bebop was too new to the south to catch hold during its regional début. Reddick mused, "Atlanta did not take to it with enthusiasm this time. As with much else, Atlanta will learn." The fact that Atlantans did not flock to the auditorium to hear Gillespie in droves did not, however, imply that Atlanta audiences did not enjoy jazz. Approximately three thousand black and white eager listeners descended upon the City Auditorium to hear Ellington perform a year earlier.<sup>256</sup>

By 1950 the once flaring debates fracturing musicians, critics, and listening audiences into pro-bebop and anti-bebop camps were fizzling into a quite consensus. According to Herman Schoenfeld's reprinted January 1950 *Negro Digest* article the "battle of bebop," waged since the style's 1943 birth, was finally over. *Negro Digest* readers learned that bebop music had survived the critical offensive launched against it and had become "anchored safely against the shifting winds of faddism." Schoenfeld told *Digest* readers that bebop was here to stay. Schoenfeld's proof was the styles growing commercial success. He cited the fact that there were more bebop musicians employed in 1950 than there had ever been before. Schoenfeld also noted that bebop records had produced a meaningful profit for recording companies. The fact that bebop records were still being pressed in large quantities in a profit-driven capitalist economy

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<sup>256</sup> "Second Annual Jazz Concert Features Gillespie Monday Night," *Atlanta Daily World*, 28 November 1948, 2; "Display Ad 19—No Title," *Atlanta Daily World*, 28 November 1948, 5; Reddick, "Persons and Places," 1949; J. Richard Jones, "Duke Ellington Concert Pleases Atlantans Sunday," *Atlanta Daily World*, 16 December 1947, 3.

was suggestive of the fact that bebop had become bankable. Schoenfeld fortuitously concluded his article hinting at the political value that jazz might have within the Cold War. The critic called attention to the fact that several bop bands had formed in Germany. He also told readers that an underground bebop movement was gaining momentum in Czechoslovakia, behind the iron curtain.<sup>257</sup>

Schoenfeld's comments regarding the popularity of modern jazz among peoples living within Cold War contested geographies foreshadowed the State Department's creation of the Jazz Ambassador program six years later beginning with Dizzy Gillespie's band's 1956 tour of the Middle East. It would be interesting to know what all those young African Americans who relied on bebop to provide the foundation for a "politics of style" that countered American racial oppression thought about the United States attempting to use that music to propagandize that racial oppression within American society did not meaningfully exist. Perhaps that question had become irrelevant by 1956. Both African American jazz music and politics were changing when the tours began. As Von Eschen has acknowledged, the first tour of the Jazz Ambassador Program was approved in December 1955, the same month that the Montgomery Bus Boycott began.<sup>258</sup> By the time the United States' co-optation of jazz was implemented a new wave of the Black Liberation Struggle, the Civil Rights Movement wave, was beginning to crash upon the shores of American democracy. This new wave of activism was defined by the introduction of new movements centers emanating from the black church, the network of southern historically black colleges and universities, and the jazz community that guided the struggle while relying primarily on non-violent direct action protest strategies,

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<sup>257</sup> Herman Schoenfeld, "The Battle of Bebop," *Negro Digest*, January 1950, 47-49, 47.

<sup>258</sup> Von Eschen, 2.

strategies that were poised to exploit the United States' civil rights-conscious Cold War foreign policy position to their advantage. Between the publication of Schoenfeld's 1950 article in *Negro Digest* and the 1955 organization of the Jazz Ambassadors Program, modern jazz, like the liberation struggle, was also changing. A new wave of modern jazz musicians were in the process of expanding this new area of jazz music by incorporating both imaginatively new ideas and old cultural traditions. As we will see in the following chapter organizations and activists participating in the new Civil Rights Movement wave of the struggle actively mobilized modern jazz and its expanding musical ideas in the effort to liberate black peoples from racial oppression.

## CHAPTER 4

### “‘I WANT JAZZ, MAN, AND NOTHING ELSE,’ CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS MOBILIZE JAZZ TO SPREAD THE REACH OF THE STRUGGLE, 1955-1963”<sup>259</sup>

On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1957 nine African American students successfully crossed the threshold of Little Rock, Arkansas’ segregated Central High School. The “Little Rock Nine,” as the students were dubbed, were defiantly exercising their constitutional right to a truly equal education, a right affirmed by the Supreme Court’s 1954 *Brown* Decision. Their courageous attempt to integrate Central High School on the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup> was their third. The Little Rock Nine’s first two tries on September 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> were thwarted. Menacing mobs of anti-integrationist whites and segregationist governor Orval Faubus’ Arkansas National Guard had blocked the school’s entryway. During the three weeks between, President Eisenhower, acting out of concern for the sovereignty of federal authority over individual states, usurped control of the Arkansas National Guard and deployed the army’s 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division to Little Rock to maintain order and ensure that Central High School would be integrated in line with federal law. The Little Rock Nine’s success on the 23<sup>rd</sup> was largely a result of their military escort.

The Eisenhower administration’s willingness to intervene to protect the students’ rights to attend Central High School had little effect in mitigating the rage of Little Rock’s white citizenry, and the size of the angered mobs embedded around the school’s exterior, waiting to confront the schools’ first African-American students. Central High School, both outside and in, was a hostile environment for the nine students, especially during the first months of the 1957-1958 school year. The students’ safety was a paramount concern. They entered and exited the school with military escort into

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<sup>259</sup> Al Fisher, “All That Jazz,” *Metronome*, January 1961, 4.



November and the now-federalized National Guard remained posted at Central High for the entire academic year. The students typically gathered with their military escort at an undisclosed off-campus location before proceeding to Central. The idea was to conceal the home addresses of the students to limit the scope of the daily harassment they faced. In October, however, an Arkansas newspaper obtained and published a list of the home address of seven of the nine students. They now potentially faced the same threats at home they faced at school.<sup>260</sup>

When the *New York Amsterdam News* learned that the students' addresses had been published the paper decided to follow suite, though for a quite different reason. The editors published the addresses of the Little Rock Nine "in response to the many requests of Harlemites who wished to shower the students with letters of encouragement and gifts." The editors had actually acquired the list before the Arkansas paper published it, but they consciously chose to withhold it from the public for fear that "further violence would be imposed upon them." Now that the students were exposed to the threat of additional violence the editors had hoped to avoid, they published their addresses hoping to offset any additional harassment with positive community support.<sup>261</sup>

Among the letters that Harlem's black community sent to the students offering support and praise, jazz composer George Russell sent a letter to Ernest Green, the only graduating senior of the Little Rock Nine. The Cincinnati born jazz drummer turned composer was in the midst of charting a new path for modern jazz when Green and his counterparts were widening the cracks in the edifice of Jim Crow. Russell was actively making a name for himself within modern jazz as a gifted composer. Russell wrote the

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<sup>260</sup> "Here are the Names, Addresses of Little Rock 9," *New York Amsterdam News*, 19 October 1957, 2.

<sup>261</sup> "Here are the Names, Addresses of Little Rock 9," 2.

score for Dizzy Gillespie's 1947 *Cubana Be/Cubana Bop*, and in the early 1950s he was advancing the theoretical ideas structuring modern jazz. In 1956 Russell transformed his novel musical ideas into sound during his first recording session as an ensemble leader, for RCA/Victor, which produced *The Jazz Workshop*.<sup>262</sup> Russell had gleaned that Green was interested in modern jazz from the press coverage of the students' courageous activism. Russell's awareness of their mutual interest in the music, especially modern jazz, likely compelled him to correspond with the young student with kind words of encouragement, hoping that his message would help sustain Green's mental strength and stamina to return to Central High every day. Quite fittingly, Russell signed the letter, "from one pioneer to another." Russell also enclosed a copy of *The Jazz Workshop* for Green's listening pleasure, and to provide an aural escape from his difficult school days. Green enthusiastically responded to Russell's letter proclaiming that he and other young black Little Rock students had been listening to modern jazz for four years -- Green was sixteen at the time -- and that he was a regular reader of *Down Beat*, one of jazz music's leading publications. Above all Green was grateful for the copy of *The Jazz Workshop*. He ended his letter asking Russell, "If you obtain any more information on jazz would you be so kind to send it...jazz down this way is scarce."<sup>263</sup> Jazz music was in high demand at the epicenter of the struggle.

The pre-WWII trend of politically mobilizing jazz music as a fundraising resource continued in the Civil Rights Movement wave of liberation struggle emerging out of the Cold War. Newly organized civil rights organizations including the Southern Christian

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<sup>262</sup> James G. Roy, Carman Moore, Barry Kernfeld, "Russell, Geroge," *Oxford Music Online* (accessed 8/25/10) (<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/J390900>).

<sup>263</sup> "Jazz Goes to Little Rock," *Down Beat*, 26 December 1957, 7.

Leadership Conference, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, and the rejuvenated Congress of Racial Equality joined established groups including the NAACP and the Urban League in staging lucrative benefit concerts featuring dozens of prominent jazz men and women between 1960 and 1967. The revenues generated from these jazz benefit concerts contributed greatly to these organizations' efforts to successfully stage non-violent direct action protest demonstrations. The benefit concerts taking place between these years were politically important events. Jazz historian Ingrid Monson has argued that beyond the financial returns, jazz benefit concerts, primarily held within New York City and the surrounding tri-state area, provided settings where southern civil rights activists could testify to the importance of the struggle before northern audiences eager to listen and that through their participation in these events, both jazz musicians and northern audiences felt as if they were contributing to the effort to dismantle Jim Crow.<sup>264</sup>

Duke Ellington likewise continued the political work of capturing, preserving, and presenting an aural history of black America that he began during WWII with his performances of *Black, Brown, & Beige* and *A' New World A'Coming*. Inspired by thematic content of *Black, Brown and Beige* Ellington designed an hour long stage production titled *My People*, which was performed for the 1963 Century of Negro Progress exposition staged at the city of Chicago's McCormick Place exposition center. *My People* combined Ellington's jazz with choral support and an impressive display of modern dance. As apart of the performance Ellington debuted several new songs that spoke to the political climate of the moment including "99% Won't Do," which was described in the press as Ellington's believe that "Negroes must put forth more effort than

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<sup>264</sup> Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Jazz Calls Out to Civil Rights and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 156-157, 206, 220.

whites in all walks of life,” and “King Fit the Battle of Alabam,” an Ellington poem set to music that celebrated Martin Luther King Jr.’s civil rights struggle in Birmingham.<sup>265</sup>

At the same time the contradictions inherent in the State Department’s Jazz Ambassadors Program were becoming increasingly visible and began to chip away at the legitimacy of the program’s propagandized message. In September 1957 Jazz Ambassador Louis Armstrong told Larry Lubenow, a young reporter for North Dakota’s *Grand Forks Herald* newspaper that “The way they are treating my people in the South, the government can go to hell,” in reference to his continued participation in the State Department’s program. Lubenow had asked the typically apolitical Armstrong about his thoughts on the harassment of the Little Rock Nine as they attempted to integrate Central High School. After hitting the associated press wire, Armstrong’s stinging criticism of the federal government’s failure to effectively intervene in civil rights issues rippled across print and broadcast media. Armstrong was not alone in exhibiting frustration with the contradiction between the program’s propagandized image of American race relations abroad and the reality of racial segregation at home. The State Department sent white cool jazz pianist Dave Brubeck’s integrated group to Poland, Turkey, India, and the Middle East in 1958 as a symbolic evidence of America’s racially diverse and harmonious democracy. In 1960, however, Brubeck was forced to cancel many scheduled performances at southern colleges when university administration realized that Brubeck’s group included African American bassist Eugene Wright. Brubeck chose to cancel the shows as opposed to replacing Wright for those dates.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Don DeMichael, “My People,” *Down Beat*, 26 September 1963, 41.

<sup>266</sup> David Margolick, “When Louis Armstrong Blew His Top,” *Arkansas Times*, 28 September 2011; Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 62-63, 124.

The exchange between George Russell and Ernest Green, however, demonstrated that jazz music, in the mid-1950s, was beginning to be politically mobilized in imaginatively new ways. Jazz music began to play a more immediate and direct role in waging non-violent direct action protest. Russell send Green a copy of *The Jazz Workshop* in direct relation to Green's participation in the struggle to integrate Central High School. Russell offered the music to Green as a resource allowing Green to cathartically replenish his mental and physical will to sustain his participation in civil rights activism, and Green and his friends wanted more. The political use of jazz to affect consciousness during this moment marked the emergence of several new trends in the music's political mobilization, trends that would continue to expand over the course of the next decade. For activists like Ernest Green, jazz provided a means of maintaining their resolve to remain actively engaged within the struggle. Jazz music was not only used to help sustain activists' steadfast commitment to non-violent direct action tactics but it also became instrumental in confronting the consciousnesses of those within the very broadly defined jazz community who were opposed, unaware, or consciously trying to ignore black America's demand for freedom. The circulation of overtly politically conscious jazz albums during the 1960s within the marketplace for recorded music carried discussion of the struggle's philosophies and goals into new social and cultural spaces. In confronting the consciousnesses of jazz community members the music became an invaluable resource helping to expand the scope and reach of the liberation struggle. The process of creating and distributing overtly politically conscious albums evidenced that the jazz community itself became an active movement center in the wave of black political activism growing out of the Cold War era. The remainder of this

chapter will focus on the ways in which jazz was politically mobilized to both support and challenge the consciousness of jazz community members.

George Russell was not alone in suggesting that jazz music offered a rising generation of African-American political activists a means of both energizing and soothing their insurgent consciousnesses. Julian Bond shared Russell's perspective regarding the political value of jazz. In the summer of 1960 Bond trumpeted that message to students engaged in non-violent sit-ins across the southern United States. Bond, then a student at Morehouse College, was a voting member of the newly formed Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Formally organized in April 1960 with the support and assistance of Ella Baker, the SCLC's Executive Director, SNCC was the formal civil rights organization growing out of the energy of the student sit-in movement. The organization was created for the purpose of coordinating the protest activities of black college students throughout the south. SNCC was philosophically anchored by a staunch commitment to non-violence. Marion Barry, a graduate student at Fisk University, was elected as SNCC's first Chairman. By May 1960 the organization was holding its first official meeting in Atlanta, in office space borrowed from the SCLC.<sup>267</sup>

One of the key recommendations suggested during the May meeting of the coordinating committee was the creation of a news publication that could disseminate news reports, articles, and updates across southern civil rights battle grounds, and link movement centers through a more formal method of communication. SNCC's *Student Voice* materialized from that recommendation and began publication in June 1960. The

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<sup>267</sup> Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 19-25.

monthly newsletter had a relatively consistent five-year run before folding in 1965. The demise of the *Student Voice* was likely an outgrowth of the internal upheaval within the organization as it shifted into its black power phase. At its peak, however, the *Student Voice* was being mailed to over 40,000 addresses including southern college campuses, northern sympathizers, and southern activists affiliated with SNCC.<sup>268</sup> The newsletter was meant to coordinate communication across movement centers that student activists were creating across the south. In the inaugural edition of the *Student Voice* the newsletter's editors told readers that, "The newsletter will contain feature material, editorials, news reports from various areas and letters to the editor. We urge that protest areas and sympathetic groups send regular and prompt reports to the office of SNCC to afford dynamic communication. We strongly encourage letters of information, criticism, comment, and of any concern that you, as responsible participants might want circulated. This is our newsletter and...our voice."<sup>269</sup>

The pioneering June 1960 edition of the *Student Voice* also became the vehicle through which Bond and the newsletter's editors highlighted jazz's relevance to the struggle for liberation. In a section titled "Place for Poetry" on the newsletter's second page, Bond wrote,

"I too, hear America singing  
 But from where I stand  
 I can only hear Little Richard  
 And Fats Domino.  
 But sometimes,  
 I hear Ray Charles  
 Drowning in his own tears  
 or Bird

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<sup>268</sup> Clayborne Carson, "Introduction," *The Student Voice, 1960-1965: Periodical of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee*, ed. Clayborne Carson (Westport, CT: Meckler, 1990) [Compiled from the Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project].

<sup>269</sup> *Student Voice* 1, No. 1 (June 1960), 1.

Relaxing at Camarillo  
or Horace Silver doodling,  
Then I don't mind standing  
a little longer."<sup>270</sup>

Sociologists Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison cited "I too, hear America singing" as evidence of the growing importance of secular music within the activities of SNCC and their efforts to reach out and recruit others into the struggle.<sup>271</sup> A closer reading of the poem, however, reveals that jazz specifically was of critical significance to the struggle. Bond in fact established jazz music's potential value to other political activists by contrasting it against other African-American secular musical traditions. "I too, hear America singing," cleverly riffed off of Langston Hughes' celebrated poem "I, too, sing America." Like Hughes poem, which used the image of the familial kitchen table and the desire to sit at that table as a metaphor for blacks' relationship with white America, Bond's poem also revolved around the concept of social location. Music, however, replaced the kitchen table as the measure of social distance in Bond's poetic voice. At the beginning of the poem Bond's constricted social location within a racially oppressive nation--signified through the line "but from where I stand"--only allows him to hear the music of Little Richard and Fats Domino. For Bond Little Richard and Fats Domino, both leading entertainers in the newly emerging genre of rhythm and blues were symbols of a dominant American popular culture in which the voice of black agency was muted and suppressed. Interestingly it was rhythm and blues music that civic leaders around the

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<sup>270</sup> Julian Bond, "I too, hear America Singing," *Student Voice* 1, No. 1 (June 1960), 1, "I too, hear America signing" was first published in a Morehouse College journal titled *Pegasus*. The June 1960 issue of the *Student Voice* was the only issue of the newsletter that contained a "Place for Poetry" section. During the newsletter's first year of publication its editors seemed to experiment with several different formats and layouts. "The Place for Poetry" was excluded from the finalized standard format.

<sup>271</sup> Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 100.



United States would turn to in the mid-1960s in their effort to placate and pacify African Americans engaged in urban rebellion.

Bond's poem shifted with the sentence "But sometimes." From his marginalized location within America he could "sometimes" manage to hear the jazz of Ray Charles, Charlie "Bird" Parker, and Horace Silver, breaking through the sounds of Little Richard and Fats Domino that America permitted him to hear. It was Charles', Parker's, and Silver's cathartically blues rich musical voices that gave Bond the courage and resolve to continue, "standing a little longer." There was deeper meaning behind Bond's selection of Parker, Charles and Silver as symbolic representations of the power and political value of jazz within the liberation struggle. As a political activist embroiled in direct action activism that often ended with arrest followed by stints in jail, Bond likely found solace in his reference to Bird's "Relaxing at Camarillo." Parker composed the tune while involuntarily confined to Camarillo State Hospital, in Ventura County, California, for six months during the summer and fall of 1946. That July Parker had been arrested after accidentally setting a mattress ablaze in a hotel room. Bird had fallen asleep while smoking. In the excitement caused by the threat of fire he fled his room dressed only in a pair of socks. He was arrested for indecent exposure, resisting arrest, and suspected arson. Parker's racial identity fanned the inflation of his charges. After spending ten days in jail the alto virtuoso was transferred to Camarillo, where he passed the time playing in the hospital band. Against "Relaxing at Camarillo's" chaotic backdrop of blaring horns, driving polyrhythmic percussive beats, and furious tempo the voice of

Parker's alto-sax sounds coolly relaxed and at the willfully capable of keeping pace with the band.<sup>272</sup>

Bond's references to Horace Silver's "Doodlin'" and Ray Charles' "Drown In My Own Tears" were equally as meaningful. Both tunes were popular hits on landmark albums, *Horace Silver and the Jazz Messengers* (1955) and *Ray Charles* (1957), respectively, that pioneered jazz music's conscious return to the core fundamentals of the African-American musical tradition. These albums marked two of the first contributions to a new style of jazz that would develop through the mid-1950s and 1960s. Primarily known as "soul jazz" by fans and "hard bop" by critics, the new style was, as Ted Gioia has described, characterized by its "grooving two-steps, guttural back-beats, insistent melody lines drenched with blues notes." Hard bop embodied what Monson characterized as an "Afro-modernists aesthetic" that blended African American cultural tradition and heritage with the feel and spirit of the modern moment.<sup>273</sup> In a 1963 article in *Negro Digest* Leroi Jones (soon to become Amiri Baraka), shortly after the publication of *Blues People*, described the new style as, "...a trend that was marked by a 'return' by many jazz musicians to what they considered their roots...saxophonists began to utilize wider and harsher tones...and accompanying piano chords became more basic and simplified, often relying on a sort of *gospel* or *churchy* feeling to emphasize the Afro-American beginning of the music."<sup>274</sup> Like other African-American musical genres, jazz, through soul jazz/hard bop, was rediscovering its cultural heritage. The new jazz genre grew stylistically diverse during the 1950s and 1960s. Jazz historian David Rosenthal has loosely categorized hard bop musicians into four areas: "musicians on the borderline

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<sup>272</sup> Marilyn Marshall, "The Real Charlie Parker," *Ebony* 44, No. 3 (January 1989), 128-132, 132.

<sup>273</sup> Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 316; Monson, 72.

<sup>274</sup> LeRoi Jones, "The Soul of Modern Jazz," *Negro Digest*, December 1963, 38-44, 42-43.

between jazz and the popular black tradition; more astringent, less popular musicians, whose work [was] starker and more tormented; musicians of a gentler, more lyrical bent who found in hard bop a more congenial climate than bebop had offered; and experimentalists consciously trying to expand jazz's structural boundaries." Despite Hard Bop's stylistic variations Rosenthal noted that new music was "*expressive*" [his italics] and that, "It was sometimes bleak, often tormented, but always cathartic; and it was 'bad' in the sense that James Brown was 'bad.'"<sup>275</sup>

If the bebop style of the previous decade musically reflected the African-American creative consciousness' response to the chaotic upheaval of the World War II moment, then the emergence of hard bop/soul jazz reconnected black consciousness and identity with its cultural roots and offered both musicians and listeners a sense of familiarity and comfort. Rosenthal noted that young jazz musicians coming of age in the 1950s, like Horace Silver and Ray Charles, as with the majority of young African Americans, listened to rhythm & blues, the classic blues, and gospel, and those styles fed their creative approach to interpreting modern jazz.<sup>276</sup> Soul jazz's foregrounding of the core elements of black culture restored jazz as a platform upon which a shared sense of African American collective identity could be strengthened. The new modern style also provided an equally formidable vehicle for emotional uplift and transcendence; both features that Bond recognized as politically valuable.

Hard bop and the Civil Rights Movement wave of the liberation struggle shared a strong connection. According to jazz vocalist Oscar Brown Jr. the both grew out of the larger awakening in African American consciousness that the period witnessed. Black

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<sup>275</sup> David H. Rosenthal, *Hard Bop: Jazz and Black Music, 1955-1965* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 43-44, 62-63.

<sup>276</sup> Rosenthal, *Hard Bop*, 24.

sacred culture not only provided fodder for new movement centers but also inspired the creativity of soul jazz musicians. Brown pointed to soul jazz songs like Bobby Timmons' "Dis Here, That There" and "Moanin'," and Cannonball Adderly's "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" to quickly demonstrate soul jazz's connection to the black church. Soul jazz's emerging political value as a mechanism for collectively uniting student activists and others engaged in struggle stemmed from the style's powerful ability to connect emotionally with listeners. Soul jazz musicians consciously sought to use their music to initiate a dialogue with their audiences. Drummer Art Blakey, famous for producing some of the hardest grooving soul jazz albums of the 1950s and 1960s, commented in a 1956 *Down Beat* interview that, "When we're on the stand, and we see that there are people in the audience who aren't patting their feet and who aren't nodding their heads to our music, we know we're doing something wrong. Because when we do get our message across, those heads and feet do move."<sup>277</sup> Soul jazz organist Jimmy Smith likewise proclaimed, "I want to feel my people, I want them to holler at me." Jazz vocalist Nancy Wilson remembered that Jimmy Smith, in the late 1950s, "...had an infectious style that lifted audiences right out of their seat. Once the word started spreading people would stand in line for hours just to hear him. If the show was sold out, they would sometimes sit two to a seat. They didn't want to miss out on this explosive new sound."<sup>278</sup>

Soul jazz expanded African Americans' listening interests in jazz during the 1950s and 1960s. Journalist John S. Wilson noted in a 1961 article in the *New York*

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<sup>277</sup> Blakey quoted in Rosenthal, *Hard Bop*, 40.

<sup>278</sup> Interview with Oscar Brown Jr., Jazz Oral History Program Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution; "Jimmy Smith: Organ Grinder Swing," *Jazz Profiles with Nancy Wilson*, National Public Radio, 09/03/2008 [radio broadcast].

*Times* that jazz music's share of the market for non-classical music had steadily increased between 1956 and 1961, rising from an approximate 10% share of the market to 18%. Wilson attributed that increase to soul jazz's ability to cut into the market share of non-jazz genre's like rock-n-roll and the increase in the number of African American consumers purchasing long play (LP) jazz albums over the period. Soul jazz drove African Americans' increased consumption. Record sales among the leading independent jazz labels, including Blue Note, Riverside, and Prestige, were strongest in African American neighborhoods in major urban centers across the country. Within two years of the appearance of Wilson's article soul jazz sales became strong enough to catapult Lee Morgan's 1963 *The Sidewinder* (Blue Note) into the top 25.<sup>279</sup>

Heavily influenced by the blues and black gospel musical traditions Horace Silver described his music as "funky." Reflecting upon his quintet's unique sound Silver suggested, "The term 'funky' in the jazz vocabulary means bluesy or down-to-earth. My music has been termed 'funky' by jazz critics and fans."<sup>280</sup> Indeed, Silver's soul jazz sound was infused with a powerful, grooving, funk sound. Miles Davis, upon hearing the Jazz Messengers perform "Doodlin'" for the first time live at Basin Street, approach Silver after the set and told the pianist, "Man, that tune Doodlin' is so funky..."<sup>281</sup> Celebrating "Doodlin'" with his signature direct attitude and colorful language, Davis' mind and soul were stirred by the tunes' blues rich sound and funky feel. In many ways soul jazz was designed to develop emotional connections between musicians and listeners. According to Art Blakey, whose drumming set the pace of "Doodlin's" groove,

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<sup>279</sup> Rosenthal, 62, 65, 73; John S. Wilson, "Expanding the Market for Better Jazz," *New York Times*, 12 March 1961, x15; Interview with Orrin Keepnews, Jazz Oral History Program Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution; Gioia, 317.

<sup>280</sup> Horace Silver, *Lets Get Down to the Nitty Gritty* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 102.

<sup>281</sup> Silver, *Lets Get Down to the Nitty Gritty*, 58.

and was likely with Silver at Basin Street, “You know, music is supposed to wash away the dust of everyday life... You’re supposed to make them turn around, pat their feet. That’s what *jazz* is all about... Play with fire; play from the heart, not from your brain. You got to know how to utilize, make the two meet. You just don’t play out of the top of your head, or play down to the people. I think you should play *to* the people.”<sup>282</sup> Jazz was indeed a cathartic outlet for Blakey. The Pittsburgh born drummer spent his early years working in his hometown’s steel mills and coal mines.<sup>283</sup> Jazz provided Blakey with an escape path, one that he hoped to extend to his audiences. The blues rich feeling of soul jazz, as Blakey, suggested offered both musicians and listeners a opportunity to experience a soothing, self-reflexive, sense of transcendence from the struggles of their daily lives. The dialogue that the music created as musicians, like Silver and Blakey, played to listeners, like Bond, provided musicians and listeners a sense of collectivity, a sense that they were not facing life’s struggles alone. The catharsis and sense of collective African-American identity that soul jazz provided gave socio-political activists like Bond the courage and resolve to stand a little longer. Soul jazz’s conscious return to the roots of black culture gave anchor to Bond’s protest consciousness. The music’s return to the blues tradition not only connected Bond to those around him but to those who had come before. Bond’s poem was published in the *Student Voice* because its editors recognized the political value that catharsis and collective identity held within the context of a direct action, grassroots, socio-political movement. They desired to make SNCC’s membership conscious of the idea that soul jazz could be mobilized as an effective political resource.

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<sup>282</sup> Blakey quoted in Rosenthal, *Hard Bop*, 73.

<sup>283</sup> Arthur Taylor, *Notes and Tones: Musician-to-Musician Interviews* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 239.

In many ways the political relationship between jazz and African American socio-politics was symbiotic. Dozens of leading jazz men and women were inspired by the activism of people like Ernest Green and Julian Bond just as much as their music compelled people like Green and Bond to participate in direct action protests. The cover of Max Roach's 1960 album *We Insist! Freedom Now* made this connection clear. The album's cover displayed a widely circulated photograph of three young African American men defiantly seated at segregated southern lunch counter. Their posture and the intensity in their eyes boldly reaffirmed the newly coined civil rights slogan, "WE INSIST!," which was printed in bold black letters across the top of the album cover. Despite the expression of annoyance on the face white counter clerk in the photograph the open textbooks held by the young activists suggested that they were there to stay. While inspired by the civil rights activism engrossing the nation, the album's presence within the commercial marketplace for music marked another important evolution in the political mobilization of jazz during the Cold War era. Not only did jazz help support and sustain the insurgent consciousnesses of activists, but it also became a valuable political resource through its ability to spread the philosophy and ideas of the Black Liberation Struggle. Jazz helped the liberation struggle penetrate new social and cultural spaces that it may not have reached alone. The music effectively politicized a cultural space that was typically reserved for leisure and recreation, and helped make engagement with the struggle's ideas and goals unavoidable. Jazz music was mobilized as a way to help identify and recruit supporters, and provided a powerful means of confronting and challenging individuals either unaware of, intentionally trying to ignore, or standing in opposition to the Black Liberation Struggle at mid-century.

The political mobilization of jazz to extend the reach of the Black Liberation Struggle required the work of individuals from multiple segments of the jazz community, especially musicians, record producers, and critics. The creation of albums like *We Insist!* transformed the individuals involved with their production and circulation within the American music marketplace into grassroots activists. Along side church congregations and student groups, the jazz community emerged as an organizing structure of the BLS. The production of overtly politically conscious jazz albums, ones that directly invoked the grassroots direct action activism defining the Civil Rights wave of the BLS, defined the jazz community's primary strategy of action. I use the concept of *Marketing Protest* to define the jazz community's strategy of action and describe how that strategy worked. *Marketing Protest* was the means by which overtly politically conscious albums, like Roach's *We Insist!* expanded the struggle's reach by forcing music consumers to engage the struggle, its messages, and its socio-political goals. Traditionally album covers, liner notes, and record reviews have always been central tools in marketing and advertising jazz albums. These marketing tools shaped consumer understanding of the products they promoted. Standard advertising practices in the music industry often called on the album covers of the records to serve as the advertising images used to promote sales. Far beyond simply hinting at the nature of the music and its potential uses, the saturation of overtly politically conscious albums' cover imagery, liner notes, lyrics, and record reviews with direct action protest philosophy, communicated that they were selling protest just as much as jazz, if not more. As a strategy of action, *Marketing Protest* marked an interesting reversal in the relationship between the actual product and the marketing of that product. Under the *Marketing*



*Protest* paradigm the philosophies and the goals of the BLS became the product that the producers of overly politically conscious albums hoped to sell. Contextualizing the ideas and meanings of the BLS as “jazz” became a clever way to coax people into taking a look and draw music consumers into a mental dialogue with the BLS.

Politically conscious albums politicized otherwise non-political spaces. The jazz album, a consumer good usually designated for recreational uses, became the vehicle through which political philosophy penetrated social and cultural spaces designated for leisure and entertainment. When readers of trade magazines like *Down Beat* and *Metronome* flipped through the issues published in the early 1960s they could hardly avoid engaging the album cover advertising images of politically conscious records.<sup>284</sup> The infusion of the BLS with jazz albums must have jolted consumer expectations, even before they actually heard the music itself. With their consumer expectations tuned to consuming jazz to fulfill leisure and entertainment purposes, a glance at these records’ album covers and liner notes indicated that they were potentially buying much more.

The socio-political activists within the jazz community did not have to actually sell overtly politically conscious jazz albums for the *Marketing Protest* strategy to be effective. The albums only needed to have a presence within the marketplace for musical entertainment. While specific albums did not have to be profitable to make meaningful statements to potential consumers regarding the liberation struggle, the overall success of the strategy was contingent upon the idea that there was a broad interest in jazz at large. Similar to the pre-WWII moment, jazz, as a genre, only needed to have commercial

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<sup>284</sup> *Metronome* suspended publication in December 1961. The magazine, which had been second only to *DownBeat* in terms of its influence within the jazz community was challenged by financial problems related to its poor business management beginning in 1959, Interview with Dan Morgenstern, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

appeal. The emergence of soul jazz/hard bop expanded the audience segment of the jazz community and ensured that *Marketing Protest* could be an effective protest strategy.

Notions of *who* the average jazz fan was, was a hot topic of conversation during the early 1960s. Generalities about the racial identity, the socio-economic class status, the level of educational attainment, and the social consciousness of the archetypal jazz fan were being debated among jazz fans themselves. This discourse was especially evident in the pages of *Metronome*'s "Readers' Forum" column during the early 1960s. Al Fisher, writing to *Metronome*'s "Readers' Forum" in the January 1961 issue, only months before Roach's *We Insist!* would be reviewed, offered insight into who the jazz fan of the early 1960s was. Fisher commented, "There are certain characteristics about a jazz fan which are common to all who claim membership in this genre."<sup>285</sup> In his letter to the "Readers' Forum" Fisher went on to describe the characteristics of the ideal jazz consumer. Fisher boldly asserted,

"The modern jazz fan is an aware cat, he is individualistic; he is opinionated, he is articulate, and he is probably in the upper income strata—since to indulge his hobby, he must be able to purchase records, an FM tuner, and turntables...The jazz fan, further, accepts nothing on its face, wants to hear for himself, and probably has more than the basic training than most of us have had in the elements of music, the technical side of music that is."<sup>286</sup>

More important than simply defining the ideal characteristics of the jazz fan, Fisher also established the jazz fan's expectations in relation to consuming jazz magazines. Fisher stated, "Now, when I pick up a jazz magazine, I do so because I want to immerse myself completely in the jazz world. This is my escape, I resent distractions, I don't want to read

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<sup>285</sup> Al Fisher, "All That Jazz," *Metronome*, January 1961, 4.

<sup>286</sup> Fisher, "All That Jazz," 4.

the scrawlings of some amateur Proust.”<sup>287</sup> In relation to his consumer expectations he further commented, “I want Jazz, man, and nothing else. In other words, an editor’s attempt to cater to what HE thinks are the jazz fan’s allied interests is an invasion of the fan’s privacy, a violation of the very individualism which make the jazz lover what he is”<sup>288</sup>

Understanding the consumer preferences that Fisher endowed upon his ideal jazz lover are critical to understanding the significance of the interaction that overtly politically conscious jazz albums made through marketing protest. Specifically, Fisher’s comments suggested that jazz, and the spaces it occupied, like *Metronome*, were private spaces of leisure, or to use his own words, “escape.” In this private space the ideal jazz consumer desired to engage “jazz, man, and nothing else.” Fisher’s jazz consumer preferred to engage jazz divorced from any of its social, political, or economic contexts. From Fisher’s perspective, to situate jazz within those contexts, or what the editor “thinks are [the] jazz fan’s allied interests” is an “invasion of the fan’s privacy.” In the time of a few weeks, with the review of Roach’s *We Insist!* appearing in *Metronome*, Fisher, and other fans like him, would have their expectations destroyed as their desired apolitical private space would become politically charged with the direct action protest politics of the Civil Rights Movement. We do not know what Fisher’s position on the movement was but we do know that as he read the May 1961 issue of *Metronome*, he was forced to engage it.

Al Fisher was not the only jazz listener to offer perspective on the characteristics of the archetypal jazz consumer. Fisher’s letter sparked debate as to how the jazz fan

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<sup>287</sup> Fisher, 4.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

should be defined. Replying to Fisher in the March 1961 “Readers’ Forum” Stan Carlin of Revere, Massachusetts challenged Fisher’s characterization along several lines. Sarcastically, Carlin wrote, “I read, with amusing interest, Mr. Fisher’s letter in *Metronome* (Jan ’61). And I am glad to hear such a unique description of me, “the jazz fan.”<sup>289</sup> While Carlin supported Fisher’s characterization of a jazz fan through his own dedication to channeling consumer dollars to the jazz world, he challenged Fisher’s position of the jazz fan’s upper-class social position. Carlin wrote, “Since this list checks closely to that of Mr. Fisher’s for purchases by ‘his’ jazz fan, I am glad to hear I am in the upper income strata, especially since for the past two years I have earned less than \$10,000 annually.”<sup>290</sup> Carlin demonstrated that the jazz fan democratic cut across class bounds as working class folk were active in the jazz world too. Carlin also hinted at some variation in the jazz fan’s consumer expectations. Carlin commented, “I read each issue of *Metronome* from cover to cover. I find it better entertaining and educational from a jazz-oriented point of view.”<sup>291</sup> By writing “jazz oriented point of view” Carlin expressed his appreciation for engaging the larger socio-political context in which jazz was situated. Like Carlin, Drew Langsner of California also suggested that jazz fans were indeed interested in the socio-political context of the music. Langsner wrote, “...I enjoy reading and keeping a literate and well presented publication. The use of apparently non-jazz material has made *Metronome* the *Aware Magazine*.”<sup>292</sup> Patricia Maher, also a California resident, echoed Carlin and Langsner and the interest in jazz’s socio-political context as she wrote “Mr. Fisher, jazz is the product and soul of America, the sum of all

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<sup>289</sup> Stan Carlin, “Opinioned?,” *Metronome*, March 1961, 4.

<sup>290</sup> Carlin, “Opinioned?,” 4.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>292</sup> Drew Langsner, “Fisher’s Catch,” *Metronome*, April 1961, 4.

its feelings, and jazz can be, and is, music, writing, acting, doing, etc. They are all the same thing, man!”<sup>293</sup> Despite those who were critical of Fisher, his characterization of the jazz fan, and the jazz fan’s consumer preferences, did have supporters. M. Procida of San Salvador wrote, “...Mr. Fisher expresses the feelings of a thousand readers who want to read about jazz. Do not fill the magazine with things not related with jazz.”<sup>294</sup>

In the February 1961 issue of *Metronome* jazz consumers, Al Fisher and M. Procida included, began to see the apolitical space of the jazz magazine become to be politically charged with the direct action protest philosophy. In this issue Candid records, the emerging jazz recording label, placed an advertisement for one of its first albums; Max Roach’s *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite*. By using the record’s album cover, brandishing the image of the Greensboro students, as the advertising image, Candid records had brought the readers of *Metronome* face to face with the Civil Rights Movement. The image of the Greensboro sit-in students also helped introduce the “Candid World of Jazz” to the readers of *Metronome*, signaling to the reader what Candid records was all about.<sup>295</sup> Additional advertisements for Roach’s *We Insist!* appeared in the March and May 1961 issues of *Metronome* as well.<sup>296</sup> Politically conscious albums created by Abbey Lincoln (*Straight Ahead*) and Art Blakey (*The Freedom Rider*) soon followed. The advertising strategy used by Candid Records and Blue Note Records to promote *Straight Ahead* and *The Freedom Rider* respectively, were no exception. When readers of trade magazines like *Down Beat* and *Metronome* flipped through the issues published in the early 1960s they could hardly avoid engaging the album cover

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<sup>293</sup> Patricia Maher, “Fisher’s Catch,” *Metronome*, April 1961, 4.

<sup>294</sup> M. Procida, “Fisher’s Catch,” *Metronome*, April 1961, 4.

<sup>295</sup> Candid Records Advertisement, *Metronome*, February 1961, 39.

<sup>296</sup> Candid Records Advertisement, *Metronome*, March 1961, April 1961, 35.

advertising images of these three records. In the case of these records consumer expectations must have received a jolt, even before they actually heard the music. With their consumer expectations tuned to consuming jazz to fulfill leisure and entertainment purposes, a simple glance at these records' album covers and liner notes indicated that they were potentially buying much more. The albums were recorded in 1960 and 1961, all three within ten months of each other. Their album covers, saturated with messages of protest, shaped the jazz world's understanding of the music these artists produced. These albums and the images and liner notes representing them openly spoke to the direct action protest philosophy gaining momentum within the Civil Rights phase of the liberation struggle.<sup>297</sup>

As a marketing strategy, using jazz to engage consumers with the movement was extremely effective. A large part of its success was due to the prominent position these musicians held in the American music market. Both Roach and Blakey were already described as two of the finest drummers that jazz has ever known.<sup>298</sup> They were recognized as the two most significant drummers on the modern jazz scene. *Down Beat* editor Don DeMichael, in a March 1960 article, identified Roach as the most influential and innovative drummer rising out of the bebop era. DeMichael also noted that, "Roach has continued to evolve and follow new paths all through his career; today he stands in the forefront of modern drummers." DeMichael then suggested that Blakey was the most influential jazz drummer since. DeMichael told readers that, "Blakey, more than anyone has been responsible for injecting an African flavor into jazz drumming. His intense,

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<sup>297</sup> Max Roach, *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite*, Candid Records 9002 (recorded Aug. 31<sup>st</sup> and Sept. 6<sup>th</sup> 1960). Abbey Lincoln, *Straight Ahead*, Candid Records 9015 (recorded Jan. 24<sup>th</sup> and Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1961). Art Blakey, *The Freedom Rider*, Blue Note Records 4156 (recorded May 27<sup>th</sup> 1961).

<sup>298</sup> Throughout the early part of the 1960s both Roach and Blakey were ranked among the top five drummers in jazz in *Down Beat*'s reader's poll and international critic's poll.

exciting, and excited playing is marked by poly-rhythms not unlike those heard in African drumming.”<sup>299</sup> Lincoln had been critically heralded as a rising jazz vocalist.<sup>300</sup> The prominent status of these musicians made engagement with their records, and the messages they contained, unavoidable for trade magazines, reviewers, and listeners. The liner notes for all three records were penned in the hand of jazz critic and activist Nat Hentoff. In these notes Hentoff successfully created a link between the music, pressed on shellac inside, to the momentum gaining social movement they supported. The Candid and Blue Note recording labels also played critical roles in the production and advertisement of these overtly politically conscious albums. *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite*, *Straight Ahead*, and the *Freedom Rider*, were collaborative efforts drawing from all segments within the jazz community.

### ***We Insist! Max Roach’s Freedom Now Suite and Candid Records***

*We Insist! Freedom Now Suite* grew out of a collaborative project between Max Roach and Oscar Brown Jr. that initially began in the late 1950s. Abbey Lincoln, Roach’s soon to be wife, was responsible for initiating their musical partnership. The two met after Lincoln asked Brown to write a song for her about Max Roach that, in Brown’s words, would reflect “how she felt about him”. Brown composed “Strong Man” per Lincoln’s request. Despite having written a song that expressed Lincoln’s love and admiration for the drummer, Brown did not actually meet Roach in person until the October 1957 session in which Lincoln, along with Kenny Dorham, Wynton Kelley, Paul

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<sup>299</sup> Don DeMichael, “The Drums in Perspective: The Styles, and how they Developed,” *Down Beat*, 3 March 1960, 23.

<sup>300</sup> In the September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1961 issue of *Down Beat* Barbara Gardner held that Lincoln was a rising vocal star in the jazz world, pg. 18.

Chambers, and Roach recorded “Strong Man,” and several other tunes for *That’s Him*, Lincoln’s second album on the Riverside label. During their first meeting Brown “remember[ed] studying Max as he sat at his drums while Abbey sang. I decided he fit the picture Abbey and the song painted.”<sup>301</sup> The lyrics that Brown penned for Abbey to sing open with the lines,

“I’m in love with a Strong Man,  
And he tells me he’s wild about me,  
I’m in love with a guy who is every thing grand,  
Any man can be.  
I’m in love with a Strong Man,  
What a hard working hero is he...”

Brown would soon develop a much more nuanced impression of Max Roach as an artist and as a man as their relationship developed. Brown grew to see Roach, the man, as an, “elegant, arrogant, embattled, embittered, victimized, and victorious veteran of a very brutal war.”<sup>302</sup> According to Brown the two musical innovators “got tight” while beginning work on a collaborative project in 1959 titled *The Beat*. *The Beat* was conceived as an extended piece artistically capturing and reflecting the African-American experience during African Americans’ transition from enslavement to freedom during the Civil War. Brown and Roach had hoped to premiere the work in celebration of the centennial anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. Both musicians brought a strong sense of political consciousness to the creative table. Brown had been a labor activist in his native Chicago before begin drafted into the Army in 1954. Brown’s tenure of service ended in November 1955, just before the beginning of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Brown was impressed by the ultimate success of the Montgomery

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<sup>301</sup> Marc Crawford, “The Drummer Most Likely to Succeed,” *Down Beat* 30 March 1961, 21.

<sup>302</sup> Crawford, “The Drummer Mostly Likely to Succeed,” 21.



Improvement Association's grassroots activism. The North Carolinian born Roach had migrated with his family to New York City during the Great Depression. His family was familiar with the economic exploitation that accompanied southern share-cropping. Roach's political consciousness grew out of the large political climate of Harlem, an epicenter of black socio-political activity during the interwar years and after.<sup>303</sup> The heightening sense of political consciousness among ordinary African-American citizens during the mid-1950s may have been one of the inspirational sources behind *The Beat*.

The Brown-Roach collaborative partnership dissolved before *The Beat* was finished. Creative differences between the two regarding how the piece should end instigated their split. Brown desired to conclude the work with a Shakespearean sonnet themed on the concept of "universal love." According to Brown the idea of ending *The Beat* with a love themed sonnet clashed with Roach's desire to end the work with a more militantly assertive artistic statement. Both Brown and Roach's philosophical differences with regard to the African American political landscape of the late 1950s placed their respective creative visions at odds. In Brown's words he represented the "Martin Luther King" side of the collaboration while Roach embodied the "Malcolm X" side of the partnership. Though, as historian and ethnomusicologist Ingrid Monson has noted, neither Brown's or Roach's political activism was exclusively defined by the liberal integrationist or nationalist sides of the political spectrum.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Interview with Oscar Brown Jr., Jazz Oral History Program Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; Arthur Taylor, *Notes and Tones: Musician-to-Musician Interviews* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 114; *Sit Down and Listen: The Story of Max Roach*, Prod. Penny Corke, Dir. Geoffrey Hayden, Princeton NJ: Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 2000 [videocassette].

<sup>304</sup> Interview with Oscar Brown Jr., Jazz Oral History Program Collection; Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 174-175.

Roach, however, continued to develop *The Beat* independently. On August 31<sup>st</sup> and September 6<sup>th</sup>, 1960 Roach had the opportunity to record the work on the new Candid Records recording label managed by Nat Hentoff. Abbey Lincoln, Alto saxophone virtuoso Colman Hawkins, and African drummer Olatunji joined Roach for the two recording sessions. The music that the group recorded was a departure from the cooperative vision that Brown and Roach established at *The Beat*'s inception. Perhaps the most significant change that Roach introduced as he set out to complete the work independently was work's title. *The Beat* had now become *We Insist!, Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite*. The work's new title was a powerful reflection of the African American political climate of the moment. The late summer recording sessions took place towards the end of a year defined by the birth of the student sit-in movement and the emergence of SNCC to formally guide student activism. "We Insist Freedom Now" was one of the slogans trumpeted by the thousands of students staging demonstrations designed to integrate public institutions across the south. The four word slogan was a rally cry of the of the struggle announcing activists' collective desire for liberation, exercised in this case, through their ability to peacefully sit and eat a meal. The student movement inspired Roach and his creative imagination. Max Roach's use of that slogan, that rally cry, as the title of what was formerly known as *The Beat* signaled his desire to keep the momentum of the student movement moving, and a desire to introduce the movement, its philosophies, and goals into new social and cultural spaces. If the title of the album did not make Roach's intentions clear the album's cover image, displaying young African American students defiantly seated at Woolworth's lunch counter certainly did.

Nat Hentoff and Candid Records were instrumental in creating the opportunity for Roach—and Lincoln, Hawkins, and Olatunji—to politically mobilize jazz music as a strategy for introducing the liberation struggle into the commercial market for musical entertainment. Candid transformed Roach’s aural political activism into a consumable commercial product, and introduced that product into the marketplace, ultimately opening an avenue for *We Insist!* to make a political intervention. In regard to Candid’s role in this endeavor Ingrid Monson has suggested that, “Few established recording labels would have had the nerve to issue an album like *We Insist! Max Roach’s Freedom Now Suite*.”<sup>305</sup> Indeed, by recording music that would be viewed as politically controversial—as we will see—Candid exposed itself to consumer backlash within the commercial market place. With few notable exceptions, Candid was the only jazz recording label to record music with such an overt political agenda.<sup>306</sup>

There were two factors that placed Candid Records in a position to assume the business risks involved with recording and distributing *We Insist!*, the civil rights allied political consciousness of Nat Hentoff, the label’s director, and the unique business mission and objectives of Candid Records as a capitalist enterprise. Jazz historian John Gennari has described the ways in which Hentoff “thought about jazz as a part of a larger set of social issues and concerns, civil rights and civil liberties preeminent among them.”<sup>307</sup> The origins of Hentoff’s support for the actions and goals of the civil rights phase of the liberation struggle were rooted in the 1944 beginning of his remarkable

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<sup>305</sup> Monson, 182.

<sup>306</sup> Randy Weston’s 1960 *Uhuru Afrika* (Roulette) was a notable exception. Weston’s album, while not directly centered on black civil rights struggles in the United States celebrate Africa’s emergence from colonial rule and highlighted Black Americans’ identification with African independence movements.

<sup>307</sup> John Gennari, *Blowin’ Hot and Cool: Jazz and its Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 170.

career in journalism. Hentoff was nineteen years old. His first job within the profession was with *The Boston Chronicle*, his hometown's leading African-American newspaper. Hentoff drafted book reviews for the news outlet. William Harrison, editor of *The Boston Chronicle* and Hentoff's first boss, had a significant influence upon the development of Hentoff's political consciousness. Hentoff recalled that, "He was my first editor, William Harrison- a stern, wiry 'race man,' in the parlance of his time. He has encyclopedic knowledge of black history and inequality. He had no patients with bigotry of any kind, including anti-Semitism."<sup>308</sup> As a "race man" who used his editorship to socially and politically advance African Americans and positively redefine black identity in an national environment in which black Americans were institutionally marginalized and segregated, William Harrison became a role model for Hentoff to follow. Hentoff gravitated to Harrison because they identified with a common enemy. The anti-Semitic climate of Hentoff's Boston childhood community naturally helped Hentoff to gravitate towards the political consciousness of Harrison where anti-Semitism was denounced.<sup>309</sup> Hentoff saw through Harrison's example that anti-Semitism and anti-black racism grew from the same social, political, and cultural sources. That African Americans and Jewish Americans could work cooperatively to overcome their oppression was an idea that naturally flowed from Harrison's logic. To fight against one form of bigotry was to fight against all forms of bigotry. Harrison showed Hentoff that there was room for a Jewish kid to become socially conscious in a black political space that displayed equal resolve in its opposition of anti-Semitism.

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<sup>308</sup> Nat Hentoff, *Speaking Freely* (New York: Knopf, 1997), 228.

<sup>309</sup> Hentoff, 41.

Hentoff left *The Boston Chronicle* in 1953 to accept an associate editorship position in *Down Beat* magazine's New York office. *Down Beat*, published in Chicago, was one of the world's leading periodicals dedicated to jazz music. Hentoff was thrilled by the opportunity to professionally immerse himself within the world of jazz. Hentoff recalled, "The chance, therefore, to leave Boston to work full-time for a jazz magazine in the jazz capital of the world was a dream come true."<sup>310</sup> While excited about the opportunity for professional development that *Down Beat* offered, Hentoff was troubled by the lack of racial diversity among the magazine's staff. *Down Beat*, a magazine dedicated to critical discussion of jazz and blues music rooted in the black musical tradition, did not employ any African Americans. Hentoff's new work environment must have seemed markedly different compared to the offices of *The Boston Chronicle*. Following the race man example set by William Harrison, Hentoff raised issue with the magazine's editorial management regarding the absence of African Americans working for *Down Beat*.<sup>311</sup> Hentoff recalled, "For some time I had been urging the Chicago office...to hire someone black there and in New York. Here we were, I said – to the growing annoyance of the front office – making money out of what was essentially black music. And there were no blacks on the magazine's staff."<sup>312</sup>

Hentoff's tenure with the magazine was brought to an abrupt halt in 1956 when Hentoff took it upon himself to diversity *Down Beat*'s staff. In 1956 the New York office was looking to fill a secretarial position. A very well qualified woman with a dark-toned skin complexion—who Hentoff and others believed to be African American—applied for the position. Hentoff immediately hired her without giving notice

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<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>311</sup> Hentoff, 41.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

to the headquarter office in Chicago. When the editor of the magazine visited the New York office the following week, and observed the recent changes in personnel in the New York staff Hentoff was quickly released from his associate editor position. Hentoff recalled, “The boss soon made a visit to New York, and the next Monday I came in with a lot of record and night club reviews to be sent to Chicago. I started to go to my desk, but I was told that would not be necessary. I had no desk anymore.”<sup>313</sup>

Again, jazz music, and the artistic imaginations of African American jazz musicians in the mid-1950s were consciously returning to the roots of the African American musical tradition for compositional inspiration and performance direction. Black musicians were becoming increasingly culturally nationalist in their approaches to making jazz. A change in attitude accompanied black musicians’ gravitation towards cultural nationalism, especially in regard to their relationships with the white entrepreneurs and critics who also profited from the music black jazzmen and women made. Hentoff observed that, “In the 1950s there was a marked private and public change of attitude by black musicians – particularly on the east coast –towards whites, not specifically Jews. They were very conscious of the rising momentum of what A. Phillip Randolph...called The Unfinished Revolution.”<sup>314</sup> Indeed, the worldviews of musicians had been influenced by the political struggle for equality over the past decade, especially in regard to equal employment and compensation. Hentoff was not alienated by the growing political consciousnesses of black jazz musicians. The absence of anti-Semitism within the political consciousnesses of jazz musicians created room for Hentoff to both identify with and aid in their struggle for a greater share of the profits their music

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<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

yielded. Speaking of New York's black jazz community specifically Hentoff remembered, "From them, I heard and sensed no anti-Semitism."<sup>315</sup> Despite rising racial tensions within the jazz community black musicians continued to embrace, in Hentoff's perspective, a cosmopolitan perspective.<sup>316</sup> Like many black musicians within the jazz community Hentoff was also inspired by the rising tide of direct action civil rights activism exploding throughout the southern United States. Hentoff recalled "Starting in the late 1950s, armies of blacks *had* been marching and countermarching in the South. They were Freedom Riders and also students involved in sitting in at lunch counters, public libraries, and jail. Their determination was infectious."<sup>317</sup> In the late 1950s Hentoff would become the chief artist and repertoire man for the newly created Candid recording label, and position himself to assist black Americans engaged in struggles for racial equality spread awareness of their movement and its messages.

In the late 1950s Archie Bleyer, owner and leading artist and repertoire man for Cadence Records, approached Nat Hentoff with an interest in developing a subsidiary recording label exclusively dedicated to recording jazz music. Cadence was primarily focused on recording more mainstream popular music. While popular music had been Cadence Record's financial bread and butter Bleyer also desired to leave his mark within jazz, a music he saw as a defining feature of American culture. According to Hentoff, "Bleyer had somehow decided that he ought to make a contribution to jazz, a music he didn't know much about, but he considered an important, though rather neglected, part of the culture."<sup>318</sup> Bleyer decided that he could best contribute to jazz by establishing and

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<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

funding a recording label whose sole mission was to record and distribute jazz of the highest aesthetic quality. Bleyer turned to Hentoff, and his well-regarded critical ear to ensure that his new jazz label would successfully fulfill its mission. Hentoff named Cadence Record's new jazz subsidiary Candid Records, a name foreshadowing the style of socially conscious music that Candid would become known for. Hentoff enjoyed total creative freedom in his role as Candid's artist and repertoire man. He was free to record music as he saw fit with little oversight, though Hentoff mused that, "[Bleyer] sometimes puzzled over some of [his] releases."<sup>319</sup>

One of the most interesting features of Candid's goals as a business enterprise was that Bleyer did not expect a high yield of return on the initial financial investment made in establishing the label; he did not expect any financial return at all. Bleyer's only hope was that Candid would manage to generate enough revenue to cover its operational expenses and break even. Hentoff noted that, "[Bleyer] was setting up a new jazz label, which would not be expected to bring him a splendid rate of return on his investment, but which would have integrity."<sup>320</sup> Candid Records was atypical of the pool of capitalist ventures within the music business and broader economy. The label's business decisions—namely which artists and which compositions should it record—were not made within the context of a business formula designed to maximize profit growth. The capitalist impulse took a back seat to artistic quality within Candid's executive office. Whether or not an artist or composition would make a lasting contribution to the jazz cannon was the sole factor determining the label's business direction. Candid's business mission was not to sell a maximum volume of records but was driven by a commitment

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<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.



to record jazz that would have a lasting influence upon the music's history. The fact that Candid was not focused on profit growth gave Hentoff the freedom to establish a recording agenda that was not beholden to the forecasted interests of consumers in the marketplace for recorded music. Candid Record's freedom from the constraints of the marketplace, coupled with Hentoff's political consciousness, influenced by the rising tide of black civil rights activism, created the opportunity for albums like *We Insist!* to enter the market for recorded music, and force consumers to consider the politics the music marketed.

Roach's *We Insist!* was musically structured as a suite and was recorded as five separate tracks. In sequence, the songs traced the history of Africans in America from slavery to the Civil Rights Movement and the re-formation of a Pan-African, Diasporic identity in the 1960s. The first track, "Driva' Man," featured the voice of Abbey Lincoln singing about the harsh reality of the work regiment of slavery and the overwhelming authority of the overseer in controlling the lives of enslaved African American. "Freedom Day," the fast paced second song of the album again featured the vocals of Abbey Lincoln as she related to listeners the anxiety and excitement that enslaved African Americans experienced with the arrival of emancipation. The solos that accompany Lincoln's voice help reflect these emotions. "Triptych," the third song, was a three part duet featuring Lincoln and Roach and spoke directly to the Civil Rights Movement. The first part, "Prayer," was reminiscent of an old spiritual, highlighting the song's connection to the movement's grass roots base in the African American church. The second part, "Protest," featured the violent and raucous yells of Lincoln, which reflected the inner emotions of rage locked away in the hearts of non-violent protesters.

The final part of the song, “Peace,” featured Lincoln’s soft vocal humming, after protest had left her emotionally drained. “All Africa,” set to a polyrhythmic percussion beat, reflective of African musical production, featured Lincoln calling out the names of various African ethnic groups, forging a sense of Pan-African consciousness and identity. Finally, “Tears for Johannesburg,” again featuring the voice of Lincoln, supported by a polyrhythmic percussion ensemble expressed support for the liberation movement gaining momentum in South Africa and was meant to musically unify a global struggle for black freedom.

If the music of *We Insist!* reflected Max Roach’s social identity and political consciousness, the decision to record it reflected Hentoff’s. In Hentoff’s perspective the artists and the repertoire that A&R men chose to include in recording sessions were a reflection of the A&R man’s personality. Hentoff approached his roll as a session leader for Candid’s recording sessions with a great deal of seriousness and respect for the creative energy of the musicians, and the professional skill of the recording engineer. Hentoff’s primary goals as a session leader were to create a relaxed climate that would allow the musicians to focus on playing, and maintain harmony between the desires of musicians and the will of the engineer regarding how to best record the music being created in the studio. Hentoff used Tommy Nola’s penthouse studio located in New York City’s Steinway Building for Candid’s recording sessions. Nola’s penthouse had what Hentoff considered optimal conditions. Nola’s studio was, “spacious without being vast; in décor and shape, it has almost none of the forbidding impersonality of several other studios.” Hentoff also prized Nola’s studio for its recording engineer Bob d’Orleans. Hentoff felt that d’Orleans possessed the right temperament. d’Orleans had a great deal

of professional skill, he knew jazz and the sound Hentoff wanted, and most importantly he was not stubborn. d'Orleans was flexible enough to try to accommodate the ideas of musicians into his engineering of their sound.<sup>321</sup> With his two objectives as a recording leader fulfilled Hentoff was able to step back and allow Roach and the other musicians to focus on making *We Insist!*. According to Hentoff, "My involvement in his 'Freedom Now Suite'...was to work with the engineer on the sound checks and the timing of the tracks. I wouldn't have dared interfere with the incandescent fusion of anger and triumph in the studio, with Max propelling the black American experience from 'Driva Man' to 'Freedom Day'."<sup>322</sup>

Hentoff's influence upon the final product was rooted in the program notes he personally composed to introduce consumers to the music impressed upon the vinyl inside the cover. His notes began with a profound quote from A. Philip Randolph, whose history of leadership within the liberation struggle stretched back to the 1910s. Not only had Randolph edited the *Messenger* during the early years of the Harlem Renaissance and provided a voice for black labor as the head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, but he also led the National Negro Congress and organized the 1941 March on Washington Movement which both advanced black America's economic interests during the depression. Now, Randolph's words were being used to help guide consumers' understanding of Roach's album and the meaning of the message his music conveyed. Quoting Randolph, Hentoff wrote, "A revolution is unfurling – America's unfinished revolution. It is unfurling in lunch counters, buses, libraries, and schools – wherever the dignity and potential of men are denied. Youth and idealism are unfurling. Masses of

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<sup>321</sup> Nat Hentoff, "The Other Side of the Record," *Metronome*, May 1961, 9-12.

<sup>322</sup> Nat Hentoff, *At the Jazz Band Ball: Sixty Years on the Jazz Scene* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 116.

Negroes are marching onto the stage of history and demanding their Freedom Now!”

Hentoff then went on to offer his critical perspective on each of the albums’ songs, and in doing so he made the connection between the music and the expanding landscape of non-violent, direct action civil rights activism immediate and clear. In direct reference to the student sit-in movement, Hentoff told potential consumers that, “Events in 1960 affected the content and direction of the composition.”<sup>323</sup> He explained how both Roach and Oscar Brown Jr. had been inspired by the growing sense of solitary among African American and African college students in their political struggles for racial equality on both sides of the Atlantic. He noted that *We Insist!* represented Roach and Brown’s contribution to that struggle. Consumers were told that the album was designed to proclaim liberation struggle activists’ unyielding commitment towards shattering racial oppression. Hentoff closed his remarks stating, “What this album is saying is that Freedom Day is coming in many places, and those working for it mean it to stick.” This album did not only serve to celebrate social protest, it was also meant to be a form of social protest itself.<sup>324</sup>

Before *We Insist! Max Roach’s Freedom Now Suite* appeared in the marketplace for recorded music as a finalized commercial product the suite premiered live at New York’s Village Gate in January 1961. While inspired by the direct action activism of SNCC the winter première of *We Insist!* served as a benefit concert for the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Jazz was being connected to the entire integrationist front of black political activism. The reviews of the suite’s first performance, mixed regarding the aesthetic quality of the work, all connected the music to its socio-political message

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<sup>323</sup> Nat Hentoff, “Program Notes,” *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite*, Candid Records 9002.

<sup>324</sup> Nat Hentoff, “Program Notes,” *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite*.

for their publications' respective readerships. John Wilson's *New York Times* review of the performance called attention to the fact that, "the southern sit-ins affected the content and direction of [the musicians] work," and that the music was intended to describe "the revolution that is now engulfing America—and its connection with the revolution in Africa."<sup>325</sup> Dan Morgenstern's review of the Village Gate benefit performance in *Metronome* also highlighted the connection between *We Insist!* and the civil rights phase of the liberation struggle. Morgenstern communicated to readers that, "*Freedom Now* portrays, in five scenes, slavery, emancipation, protest and prayer, the revolution in Africa, and the coming of *Freedom Day*, mainly in terms of emotional states."<sup>326</sup> Morgenstern's review went a step beyond solely exploring the merits of the suite; it defended the political mobilization of jazz generally. Morgenstern explained to *Metronome*'s readership that,

*Freedom Now*, though it often skirts melodrama, is an exciting work of considerable power. The idea of using jazz to tell the story of 'Freedom Now' was not far fetched. Jazz is a product of that story- it's natural language, so to speak. More convincing than any previous attempt to combine contemporary jazz and other art forms, 'Freedom Now' consciously employs jazz as a weapon in the good fight, and proves to be a potent one.<sup>327</sup>

Morgenstern reminded readers that jazz was a reflection of the black American experience, and that the ideas aurally expressed within the music could not be separated from the broader social and political dynamics shaping the black life. Morgenstern suggested that jazz was not only an appropriate place to artistically discuss the rising tide of civil rights activism but that, more meaningfully, they were inseparable. In the context

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<sup>325</sup> John S. Wilson, "Jazz Composition of Protest Heard," *New York Times*, 16 January 1961, 20.

<sup>326</sup> DM, "Freedom Now," *Metronome*, March 1961, 51.

<sup>327</sup> DM, 51.

of the struggle for liberation, via civil rights, it was natural for jazz to be politically mobilized to spread the struggle's philosophy, and help activist accomplish their goals.

In February 1961 *We Insist!* made its début within the marketplace for recorded music. Candid Records placed a full-page advertisement in *Metronome*'s February 1961 issue. The advertisement was designed to not only introduce Candid's recordings to potential consumers but also introduce the label itself. The ad's copy stated "Introducing the Candid World of Jazz." Candid was a venture that was relatively unfamiliar to consumers. The new label needed to establish a brand identity in addition to promoting its musical products. Candid took advantage of space allotted in the full-page ad to promote six of its first recording projects. Album covers were used to visually represent each recording. Covers for albums by Charles Mingus, Otis Spann, Cecil Taylor, Nancy Harrow, and Richard Williams joined the cover of Max Roach's *We Insist!*.

The creative design of the advertisement made Roach's *We Insist!* stand out from the other albums. *We Insist!*'s album cover appeared at the center of the advertisement, and the page the advertisement was printed on in *Metronome*. The color contrast features of the advertisement also drew the focus of *Metronome* readers. The background of the advertisement was colored black, while the background of *We Insist!*'s cover was colored white. The dark background colors of the Charles Mingus and Otis Spann album covers flanking *We Insist!* on its left and right sides, respectively, visually drowned both albums against the advertisement's black backdrop. The color contrast dynamics made *We Insist!* jump off the page with immediacy. The advertisement's color contrast also made the title of Roach's recording stand out. The words "We Insist" were printed in a bold, black, and dramatically large type set. The titles of the other five recordings were all

printed with significantly smaller type sets. The white background of the album cover against the black backdrop of the advertisement had the effect of highlighting the civil rights slogan with immediacy. *We Insist!*'s cover image was noticeably unique compared to the five other album covers. The covers for the other recordings all displayed the image their respective musicians, and each image portrayed each musician with a line of sight focused on some unknown object. The cover of *We Insist!* did not display Roach but instead a popularly circulated photograph from the student sit-in movement showing three students defiantly seated, and waiting to be served at a segregated lunch counter. As opposed to looking off in some obscure direction the lines of sight of each of the three young civil rights activists focused directly into the center of the camera lens, which, for those looking at the printed advertisement, created the visual effect of making direct eye contact with student activists. Candid's advertisement placed the recorded music consumers flipping through the pages of *Metronome* in direct engagement with the direct action civil rights activism exploding across the southern United States; consumers literally came eye to eye with the struggle for liberation. The advertisement transformed *Metronome* into a politically charged space forcibly reminding its readers of African Americans' insistence upon "Freedom Now," and compelled them to consider what role they played, as jazz enthusiasts, in African Americans' struggle for liberation. Additional Candid advertisements featuring *We Insist!* appeared in the March 1961 issue of *Metronome*, and in March 1961 Candid advertisements featuring the album began to be published in *Down Beat*.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> Candid Records advertisements featuring *We Insist!* appeared in the following issues; *Metronome*, February 1961, 39; *Metronome*, March 1961; *Down Beat*, 2 March 1961, 2; *Down Beat*, 30 March 1961, 43; *Down Beat*, 11 May 1961, 30; *Down Beat*, 22 June 1961, 37.

Consumers encountered critical reviews of *We Insist!* in the jazz press that powerfully reinforced the political statements they viewed in advertisements displaying the album's cover. *Down Beat*'s Don DeMichael awarded the album five stars—the most an album could achieve—in his March review. DeMichael introduced his assessment of the record to *Down Beat*'s readership with an admission of his inability to categorize the music Roach and the other's performed. DeMichael told readers that, "I don't know if all this is jazz or not." DeMichael's admission demonstrated that marketing protest was proving to be an effective strategy of action in expanding the presence of the liberation struggle into new spaces. Roach's status as a prominent jazz musician, recording on a new jazz label, made reviewing *We Insist!* a business-as-usual decision for the jazz press and critics, and created the opportunity for the album to accomplish the political work it was designed to perform. If the jazz press knew *We Insist!* was the work of a political activist just as much as it was the product of a jazz musician the album may have been overlooked. While in DeMichael's professional opinion the music eluded categorization as jazz, he noted that "the music stand on its own."<sup>329</sup>

DeMichael suggested that the "political and psychological overtones" embedded within the music were the album's most powerful elements. DeMichael's analysis of each song on the album focused on how the musicians' technique emotionally articulated African Americans' intense desire for liberation, beginning with their resistance to enslavement through the unfolding struggle for civil rights. DeMichael also highlighted the connections between the African Americans' battle against racial oppression and the black struggle against colonial domination unfolding across the African continent. DeMichael wrote, "I do know that this is magnificent music, powerful music, vital music.

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<sup>329</sup> Don DeMichael, "Spotlight Review," *Down Beat* 30 March 1961, 30.



Oscar Brown Jr. and Roach have constructed a work (whether it is a suite or not is beside the point) that is roughly a history of the escape from oppression in both this country and Africa. The message is potent.” In DeMichael’s opinion the album was less a source of entertainment for listeners but more so another strategic maneuver in the effort to make inescapable African Americans’ demands for social and political equality, and economic empowerment. DeMichael explained, “This album is the most devastating thing of its kind that I’ve heard. Sure, it’s protest. It’s also violent, in part. Some may object to the message it contains – and this is one album definitely with a message...but the sensitive listener cannot deny that it is a vibrant social statement and an artistic triumph.” In concluding his review DeMichael prodded readers to concede that the social message *We Insist!* conveyed to consumers was effectively communicated, regardless of whether or not consumers were interested in hearing its message.<sup>330</sup>

Ted White’s May 1961 *Metronome* review of *We Insist!* continued to underscore the political statement the album made, and deepened consumers’ perception of the album as a form of protest. White’s review was in agreement with DeMichael’s regarding the inability to easily categorize the recording by style. The review made the point that musically *We Insist!* was atypical of the bebop and hard bop styled recordings that made Roach a leading figure within the jazz world. The review also noted that *We Insist!* was one of Candid’s strongest offerings. Also similar to DeMichael’s review White’s review placed its critical analysis less on the music and more so on the music’s ability to affect listeners. The White declared, “Here Max Roach presents a defiantly insistent brand of music which literally pulls the listener out of his chair, charges straight to his emotions, and dispels the apathy of even the most jaded jazz fan. What this record

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<sup>330</sup> DeMichael, “Spotlight Review,” 30

has is music with *power*, a tremendous, muscular, moving power; its charged with a high tension which strikes emotional sparks.” *We Insist!*, in White’s perspective, had the power to draw listeners into engagement with the political consciousness the music expressed. “The high level of emotional intensity projected into the music” by Roach, Lincoln, and others produced an aural experience so formidable that “the apathy of even the most jaded jazz fan” would be eroded. The emotional effect that the album held over its listeners had transformative abilities. White explained that within the music listeners would hear a “dramatic assertion of the Negro’s rights, powers, and glories,” and that the work also operated as a “lament for that which [Roach] has felt, and a protest against the indignities of his experiences.” White concluded his assessment remarking, “There can be no middle reaction in listening to this record. It demands, it *insists*, and it must be heard.” The album was, in White’s opinion, so forceful in its political declarations that after hearing the music listeners would be forced to take sides within the black liberation struggle. *We Insist!* possessed the ability to pull listeners into the political discourse surrounding the struggle. Regardless of whether listeners decided to take supporting or opposing stances in African Americans’ struggle for equality the struggle could no longer be ignored within the jazz community.<sup>331</sup> In *Metronome*’s August 1961 issue *We Insist!* was ranked among the top albums reviewed by the magazine’s staff. The recording was indeed becoming ever increasingly difficult to ignore.<sup>332</sup>

Consumer reaction to *We Insist!* within the commercial marketplace for recorded music became visible by fall 1961. The recording’s sustained presence within the marketplace—through advertisements, critical reviews, and record store shelves—

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<sup>331</sup> Ted White, “Max Roach,” *Metronome*, May 1961, 34, 35.

<sup>332</sup> *Metronome*’s Best, *Metronome*, August 1961.

ensured that the liberation struggle remained in the minds of record consumers. Not only was the album successful in drawing potential listeners into engagement with the liberation struggle, but it also prodded listeners to reflect upon the role music should play within politics. The increasing presence of African American political ideology within the jazz press, one of the record consumer's outlets for leisure and entertainment, prompted O.F. Blackshire, a jazz fan from Detroit, to express his opinion regarding jazz and political protest in writing to the editors of *Metronome*. The jazz magazine published Blackshire's letter in its September 1961 "Readers' Forum" column. Blackshire wrote,

As far as protest in music is concerned, I just happen to feel that it just happens to be the predominant present of many of the top creators in jazz today, and is a necessary and vital part of today's music. The height of musicianship is the ability of the artist and composer to convey his true feelings to the listener. If protest happens to be a feeling that is not welcome in many segments of our society today, that's too bad. I am sure that creators such as Charles Mingus, Max Roach, Cecil Taylor, Eric Dolphy, etc., would be glad to know that their point is getting across, even if it is not being accepted by all.<sup>333</sup>

Blackshire took note of the saturation of his leisure space with protest and expressions of politically philosophy. The presence of Black political activism within the jazz world, in his opinion, was understandable. He argued to fellow *Metronome* readers that if jazz was a reflection of the social and political condition of its creators, and that if the social and political condition of its creators was influenced by the explosion in black political direct

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<sup>333</sup> Mingus, Taylor, and Dolphy were also musicians with reputations characterized by political outspokenness. The three musicians had participated in the revolt against the 1960 Newport Jazz Festival as a response between the pay discrepancies between black and white musicians. See Scott Saul, *Freedom Is, Freedom Ain't* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003) and John Gennari, "Hipsters, Bluebloods, Rebels, and Hooligans: The Cultural Politics of the New Port Jazz Festival, 1954-1960," *Uptown Conversations: The New Jazz Studies*, ed. Robert O'Meally, Brent Edwards, Farah Griffin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004) for detailed accounts of the Newport Revolt. Candid Records released a recording of the alternative festival that the revolting musicians staged, *Newport Rebels*, Candid Records 9022. While not an overtly politically conscious album as defined by this study, Charles Mingus' album, *Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus* (Candid 9005) included a song called "Fables of Faubus," whose lyrics protested the climate racial segregation and violence in the south; O.F. Blackshire, "Protest in Music," *Metronome*, September, 1961, 2.

action protest activity, then it was natural for that political sentiment to appear in their music. Regardless of whether or not listeners supported Roach's and others' political mobilization of jazz music, Blackshire acknowledged that their efforts were effective in engaging audiences interested in listening to and reading about jazz. In anticipation of those dissenters who would chastise Roach and others for their use of jazz music as a vehicle for political expression Blackshire reminded fellow music lovers that within Beethoven's music one could hear "feelings of change and revolution," and that Bartok's music "seethes with a feeling of discontent." Blackshire accepted that listeners were indeed free to disagree with the messages expressed within albums like *We Insist!* as long as there adverse opinions did not become "powerful enough to stifle necessary progress."<sup>334</sup>

The voice of dissent against the political work that *We Insist!* was successfully performing quickly followed. Jazz fan and *Metronome* reader Frank Ver Palk, from Shelton, Connecticut, was outraged that his relaxing haven of leisurely enjoyment had become overrun with discussions of African Americans' contemporary struggles for freedom from racial oppression. Similar to Blackshire, Ver Palk expressed his concerns regarding *Metronome's* recent content in a letter to the magazine's editors, which was published in the October 1961 Reader's Forum column. Ver Palk complained that the appearance of the black socio-political concerns within the pages of *Metronome* had corrupted the magazine's integrity as a reputable forum for discussion of music. Ver Palk grumbled that, "Today [*Metronome*] seems to cover everything except music. It is too far out. It is too opinionated without background to give it depth. It seems more interested in things like race, narcotics, a small clique of writers, etc. than music." Ver

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<sup>334</sup> Blackshire, "Protest in Music," 2.

Palk characterized the struggle's politicalization of *Metronome* as a "creeping sickness," and that the struggle's presence—what Ver Palk referred to as "the accent on Jim Crow"—was the result of the conscious efforts of the "Greenwich Village super-liberal, perhaps even quasi-communist." Ver Palk charged that the magazine's new non-musical content was dramatically out of touch with the perspectives of the American public at large. Ver Palk urged the magazine's editors to "Bring back an over-all USA approach. And let's not be so anti-WASP (R)." Ver Palk defensively pronounced that, "To be white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and Republican doesn't automatically mean a bigot or hater." Ver Palk's emblem of Anglo-Protestant Republicanism was Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, who Palk described as "pretty sensible and might help us keep our freedom."<sup>335</sup>

The sensible and freedom-protecting Goldwater that Ver Palk described had only a year earlier declared war against the effort to dismantle Jim Crow in his conservative manifesto, *The Conscience of a Conservative*. In that document Goldwater argued that the federal government had no business interfering with the oppressive Jim Crow laws of Southern States. He also called the Supreme Court's decision to dismantle separate-but-equal in its 1954 *Brown* decision an "extravagant and shameless misuse" of the concept of civil rights and the Court's power. While Goldwater did state that he was personally in agreement with the ideas supporting the decision, including the belief that segregation buttressed social perceptions of black inferiority, he suggested that the conservative conscience should turn a blind eye to the unchecked climate of racial terrorism, economic

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<sup>335</sup> Frank Ver Palk, "Is He Serious?," *Metronome*, October 1961, 2.

exploitation, and social and political oppression that black Americans faced in southern states like South Carolina and Mississippi.<sup>336</sup>

Ver Palk must have been in agreement with Goldwater. In Ver Palk's mind civil rights struggles in the south had nothing to do with life in Connecticut. Civil rights struggles were far beyond his scope of concern, and he resented the fact that jazz was bringing those issues into his home and invading his recreational activities. Ver Palk's letter demonstrated that marketing protest was indeed proving to be an effective strategy of widening the scope of the liberation struggle. Jazz provided activists like Roach, Lincoln, the other musicians featured on the album, and Hentoff an opportunity to bring jazz fans like Blackshire and Ver Palk in direct confrontation with the dynamics of African-American political activism. Abbey Lincoln's politically conscious *Strait Ahead*, in many ways an extension of *We Insist!*, would trigger an even stronger response within the jazz world.

### ***Straight Ahead* and Candid Records**

In late January and early February 1961, as *We Insist!* was making its marketplace debut, Abbey Lincoln, Max Roach, Booker Little Colman Hawkins, and several other musicians returned to Nola Penthouse Studio and recorded Lincoln's *Straight Ahead*, Candid's politically outspoken follow up recording to Roach's controversial album. *Straight Ahead* represented a continuation of the political work that Roach's *We Insist!* was successfully performing. *Strait Ahead* represented a sustained effort to engulf the jazz world within the black liberation struggle, and discussions of its goals and

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<sup>336</sup> Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative* (Shepherdsville, KY: Victor Publishing Company, 1960), 31-37.

philosophies. The politically engaged jazz community cohort that produced *We Insist!* also contributed to the creation of *Straight Ahead*. Both projects were linked by the creative energies of the same set of leading musicians, including Abbey Lincoln, Max Roach, and Colman Hawkins. As with *We Insist!*, Nat Hentoff produced the two *Straight Ahead* recording sessions, penned the album's liner notes, and ensured that Candid brought the album to market. The intensity of *Straight Ahead's* overt political commentary matched *We Insist!'s* vocalization of the liberation struggle and its meaning. *Straight Ahead* likewise drew its title from the pool of slogans shouted by non-violent activists engaged in direct action protest.

The key difference between the two albums was their respective creative leadership. Roach was *We Insist!'s* front man. Lincoln, however, took the creative lead on *Straight Ahead*, and as a result the jazz world gained an understanding of the Black Liberation Struggle, its philosophies, and goals through the perspective of a defiantly proud, politically conscious, black woman. Relative to Oscar Brown and Max Roach, Lincoln's heightening sense of political consciousness was a recent development of the mid-1950s. Lincoln's relationship with Brown and Roach played a large role in Lincoln's political awakening. Lincoln's reading of E. Franklin Frazier's *The Negro in the United States*, a socio-historical examination of black life and its institutions in relation to the larger American society and culture in which they existed, coupled with the birth of the modern civil rights movement greatly contributed to Lincoln's desire to become active in African American socio-politics. Building on the work of Clenora Hudson-Weems and Farah Jasmine Griffin, jazz historian Eric Porter described Lincoln's political consciousness as the embodiment of an "Africana womanist perspective;" a

concept identifying black women committed to black feminist ideals while also embracing a human rights-centered perspective without regard to gender or race. Porter traced the visibility of Lincoln's developing Africana womanist political consciousness to her 1957, 1958, and 1959 albums recorded for the Riverside label, respectively titled *That's Him*, *It's Magic*, and *Abbey is Blue*. Porter noted that in the chronological succession of each album there was a noticeable shift in thematic content from romantic ballads to socially relevant songs.<sup>337</sup>

Abbey Lincoln's Africana womanist view of the liberation struggle was articulated well within the music of *Straight Ahead*. Lincoln's *Straight Ahead* was comprised of seven tracks. The first and title track, "Straight Ahead," showcased the voice of Abbey Lincoln as she musically asked how long social progress in the United States would take. For better or worst, she suggested that African Americans would continue to move forward in asserting their social equality. "When Malindy Sings," the second track, based on the poetry of Paul Lawrence Dunbar, showed Lincoln's ability to riff off of other forms of African American Expression. The third song, "In the Red," communicated to listeners the reality of the experience of African American poverty. "Blue Monk" was Abbey Lincoln's tribute to Thelonious Monk. The track does not specifically reflect on the African American experience but pays homage to the genius of the legendary jazz pianist. "Left Alone," the fifth selection, featured Lincoln performing a song made famous by the legendary Billie Holiday. The song related to African American women's sorrow and their inability to find family and home. Inspired by the poetry of Langston Hughes, "African Lady," set to a polyrhythmic percussive beat, was

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<sup>337</sup> Eric Porter, *What is this Thing Called Jazz?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 151, 159-161.



the musical expression of the creation of a female Pan-African identity. “Retribution,” the album’s final track, and the last impression that Lincoln left for listeners, expressed her desire for the fair and just opportunity to participate in America that African Americans were owed. “Let the retribution match the contribution,” were the lyrics that ended the album. The album forced the jazz community to come to terms with the Black Liberation Struggle as Lincoln experienced it.

Advertisements for *Straight Ahead* began to appear within the jazz press and the marketplace for recorded music in August 1961. Candid Records placed a newly designed full-page ad on the page opposite the inside front cover of *Metronome*’s August 1961 issue prominently featuring Lincoln’s *Straight Ahead*. The magazine’s readers immediately came face to face with the Black Liberation Struggle in the issue’s first page. Candid’s ad featured *Straight Ahead* along with four other albums; Phil Wood’s *Rights of Swing*, Booker Ervin’s *That’s It*, Pee Wee Russell and Coleman Hawkins’ *Jazz Reunion*, and *Newport Rebels*, featuring some of the music performed by Max Roach, Charles Mingus, Eric Dolphy, Roy Eldridge, and Jo Jones performed at the alternative 1960 Newport Jazz Festival. Similar to Candid’s promotion of *We Insist!*, the advertisement’s visual design immediately drew viewers’ attention to *Straight Ahead*. The ad’s layout displayed the cover images of the five albums in two columns, from the left side of the page to the right side. The first column, on the left side of the page, from top to bottom displayed a block of text, followed by the cover image of *Straight Ahead*, followed by the cover image of *Rights of Swing*. The second column, on the right side of the page, from top to bottom displayed the cover images of *Newport Rebels*, *Jazz Reunion*, and *That’s It*, respectively. Adhering to the custom of reading, and looking,

from left to right in the English language, the first thing that caught viewer's attention in the advertisement was the block of text. The text, printed in a progression of four short, cascading lines, from top to bottom, respectively read, "5 NEW," "CANDID," "ALBUMS," "CANDID WORLD OF JAZZ." The cascading layout of the block of text forced readers to abandon the customary left to right reading/viewing sequence and shift to a top to bottom sequence. As a result, the next thing within the advertisement that viewers encountered after reading the block of text was the image displayed directly below it, the *Straight Ahead* album cover.<sup>338</sup>

Viewers of the advertisement were confronted powerfully by the image of a vocally assertive Abbey Lincoln. The top of the album cover displayed Lincoln's name along side the album's civil rights slogan based title, "Straight Ahead," in bold capital letters. Not only did the words introduce the artist and the record, but they also guided reader's understanding of the image displayed below. The image displayed a portrait of Lincoln's bust rising out of darkness. With shoulders covered by what appeared to be a blue blazer Lincoln's line of sight was focused "straight ahead." The forward-looking Lincoln's appearance out of a darkened backdrop could be read as symbolic of the liberation struggle itself, positioning Lincoln at a milepost in black America's ongoing emergence from a past defined by the limitations of structural and ideological racial discrimination. Lincoln's image on the cover of *Straight Ahead* also represented a new plateau in the desexualization of black female identity within the market for musical entertainment. Eric Porter identified this trend in the representations of Lincoln on her three prior Riverside albums. The image of an earnest Lincoln, with an open mouth vocally declaring her right to freedom, presented on the cover of *Straight Ahead* was a

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<sup>338</sup> Candid Records advertisement featuring *Straight Ahead* appeared in *Metronome*, August 1961, 1.

dramatic departure from the image of Lincoln lying across a blue pillow, adorned in jewelry and makeup, wrapped in a spaghetti-strapped gown, with the right strap dangling seductively from her shoulder, displayed on the cover of her 1957 Riverside album *That's Him*.<sup>339</sup>

Nat Hentoff's programming notes for *Straight Ahead* strengthened consumers' impression that the album was designed as a vehicle for political expression. Hentoff created the impression that *Straight Ahead*, in artistic content and message, was an extension of Roach's *We Insist!*. His opening remarks suggested that Lincoln's aural expression of "the pride and pain of being a Negro in America" on *We Insist!* had transformed Lincoln as an artist, and that her new creative energies were being exercised on *Straight Ahead*. Hentoff tied Lincoln's artistic evolution to the awakening of her political consciousness, suggesting that, "part of the liberation of Abbey's singing has come from a renewed and urgent pride in herself as a Negro." Hentoff explained to readers that Lincoln's development as a jazzwoman was influenced by her growing involvement with the "movement for equality" and her engrossment within the "whirlpool of African Nationalism." He cited Abbey's leadership of the Cultural Association for Women of African Heritage as an example of Lincoln's foray into Black Nationalism. Hentoff's programming notes, coupled with advertisements, helped establish Abbey Lincoln's reinvented persona within the commercial marketplace for recorded music. Lincoln was no longer a jazz vocalist making socially relevant music. *Straight Ahead* demonstrated Lincoln's transformation into a socio-political activist who happened to sing, and sing very well.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Porter, *What is this Thing Called Jazz?*, 161.

<sup>340</sup> Nat Hentoff, "Program Notes," *Straight Ahead*, Candid Records 9015.

The new identity that *Straight Ahead*, through its music and politically inflected packaging, created for Lincoln had a significant influence upon how the album and Lincoln as a jazz artist were discussed in the press. The impression of Lincoln as an activist who sang set the tone and established the frame of reference for conversations surrounding the album. Barbara Gardner's September 1961 profile interview of Lincoln in *Down Beat*, titled "Metamorphosis of Abbey Lincoln," picked up on the theme of "artistic transformation as a result of an evolved socio-political consciousness" that Hentoff's programming notes had constructed. Because the direction of Gardner's interview was influenced by the frame of reference *Straight Ahead* suggested, a significant portion of the profile discussed the liberation struggle, its philosophies and its goals. The article chronicled the awakening of black America's political consciousness through Lincoln's example as opposed to solely presenting a musician's creative approach towards making music.<sup>341</sup>

In the beginning of the profile Gardner positioned Lincoln as an artist who, through her past career experiences and rising political consciousness, wrestled with antagonistic feelings towards white America. Gardner explained to *Down Beat*'s readership that the "bitterness" that Lincoln felt towards whites stemmed from white America's structural and ideological oppression of blacks. Gardner gave her readers an opportunity to learn of Lincoln's personal experiences coming to terms with her social alienation as a result of her racial identity. Readers read how the 1939 film adaptation of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* educated a nine-year-old Lincoln about the role young African-American women were supposed to play within American society. Lincoln explained how Butterfly McQueen's portrayal of the buffoonish "Prissy," the

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<sup>341</sup> Barbara Gardner, "Metamorphosis of Abbey Lincoln," *DownBeat*, 14 September 1961, 18-20, 18.

only character in the film with whom Lincoln could identify, taught her that she could never aspire to the beauty and fortitude of the film's white heroine, Scarlett O'hara, played by Vivien Leigh, nor could she hope to be swept off her feet by Rhett Butler, the film's leading beau played by Clark Gable.<sup>342</sup>

Garner's profile then examined the development of Lincoln's career as a professional singer. After gaining notoriety as a supper club singer, more so for her stunning beauty than the quality of her voice, while performing in Honolulu during the early 1950s, readers learned how an entourage of white managers, agents, and publicists consciously worked to deracialize Lincoln's image to broaden her appeal. Lincoln was sent to speech schools to whiten the sound of her voice. She was told that, "She must first of all forget the color issue" and that, "She must not think of people as white or black but just people. It was not important that, she, herself was black." Lincoln's entourage told her that their plan was to make the most of her racial identity and craft her as a "sepia sex symbol." While touring the country as a hyper-sexualized lounge singer Lincoln began to observe and reflect on upon the impoverished conditions in which African-Americans lived in the cities she visited. Lincoln explained to readers how the condition in which black America lived troubled her. They were the people she "wanted to identify with when she sang, but they couldn't even come to the places [she] was working most of the time." Lincoln told readers that in beginning to question why blacks lived in urban poverty, she dismissed the conclusion that "they were really lazy, shiftless, and no good by nature..." Lincoln instead turned to analysis of America's social structure for an explanation for black America's plight. She told *Down Beat's* readership that she began to find answers in the pages of E. Franklin Frazier's *The Negro in the*

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<sup>342</sup> Gardner, "Metamorphosis of Abbey Lincoln," 18.

*United States*, which helped crystallize her understanding of structural racial oppression within the United States. Gardner explained how the awakening of Lincoln's consciousness informed her approach to music making. Lincoln began to consciously desexualize her image and became increasingly focused on making music that was socially relevant to the black American experience. Gardner positioned Lincoln's participation in Roach's *We Insist!* as a significant benchmark in Lincoln's metamorphosis into a politically conscious jazz artist.<sup>343</sup>

Gardner suggested that the conclusion of Lincoln's transformation had turned her into a modern age female "slave emancipator" using her craft to awaken the black masses in the name of liberation from racial oppression. Gardner noted how Lincoln, "...began a detailed and concentrated study of the Negro people. She as attempted to steep herself in the history of African culture, as well as the individual and collective contributions of the Negro in this country. Today, she unflinchingly considers herself a black nationalist." In the profile Lincoln acknowledged that the American public might interpret her embracement of Black Nationalism as controversial, but it was a position from which she would not shy away. Lincoln found no fault in celebrating the accomplishments of black Americans and taking pride in her African heritage. She explained that it was "...such a wonderful feeling to suddenly become aware of the fact that my people were kings and queens instead of ignoramuses." Lincoln also clarified that her embracement of Black Nationalist philosophy did not necessarily suggest an antagonistic stance against white America. Lincoln declared that she desired to come to embrace and love all regardless of racial differences. She told readers, however, that the first step in arriving at a humanist outlook began with developing a love of her herself as a black woman. Gardner's article

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<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

contributed to the sustained effort to broaden the presence of the liberation struggle within the world of jazz. In glancing over Lincoln's profile *Down Beat's* readership was forced consider the struggle and its meaning in a space otherwise designated for leisure.<sup>344</sup>

*Straight Ahead's* overt political overtones also had a significant influence upon jazz critics' evaluations of the project, and as a result elongated the jazz world's exposure to the dynamics of black socio-political activism. Praising *Straight Ahead* in the September 1961 issue of *Metronome* a reviewer suggested, in reference to the album's title song, that, "It is appropriate that the generation that produced the Freedom Riders should also, in *Straight Ahead*, have produced one of the most moving songs out of jazz since *Strange Fruit*." Not only did the reviewer suggest to *Metronome's* readership that there was a connection between the album and the explosion of non-violent direct action protests across the south, he held that both stemmed from the same source. In reading the review potential record consumers interested in hearing the music of "one of the great jazz singers of our time," as Lincoln was heralded, had to consider the album's political message and the larger struggle of which it was apart.<sup>345</sup> John Wilson's late October review of *Straight Ahead* in the *Washington Post* likewise celebrated album's aesthetic quality and described Lincoln as "a woman, assured, positively directed and glowing with conviction." Wilson argued that it was Lincoln's "sense of deep, personal involvement" with the socially conscious music that injected her singing with "the searing intensity that burns through her singing." Wilson's review compelled *Washington Post* readers to

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<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>345</sup> CES, "Abbey Lincoln," *Metronome*, September, 1961, 29.

reflect upon the idea that Lincoln's personal involvement with the struggle was the source of creative inspiration empowering her singing.<sup>346</sup>

Ira Gitler's November 1961 review of *Straight Ahead* in *DownBeat* was also heavily influenced by the album's overtly political connotation. In opening the review Gitler explained to readers that, "It is usually beyond the reviewer's providence to discuss anything but the music, but here the sociological aspects are too interwoven with the material to be ignored." The majority of Gitler's two-column review engaged "Lincoln the activist" as opposed to "Lincoln the jazz vocalist." Gitler did not actually begin to address the aesthetic quality of the album's music until the review's end. In reading Gitler's review record consumers actually encountered the beginnings of an intense debate over the philosophy and direction of the Black Liberation Struggle, and the appropriateness of using jazz as a vehicle to spread the struggle's message. Gitler was staunch in his opposition towards Lincoln's use of jazz as an agent of black political activism. He told readers that he "dislike[d] propaganda in art when it is a device." Gitler clarified carefully that he was not opposed to the struggle itself but that he objected to the presence of the struggle within the world of jazz. Gitler charged that Lincoln, in manipulating jazz for political objectives, had become a "professional Negro." Gitler's identification of Lincoln as a professional Negro represented his interpretation of the consciously constructed image of Lincoln as an activist who sang within the marketplace. Gitler's reaction to the album, while negative, revealed the great extent to which marketing protest was proving to be an effective strategy of action within the struggle.<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> John S. Wilson, "Singer in Focus," *Washington Post*, 29 October 1961, X23

<sup>347</sup> First published in November 1961 Gitler's review was reprinted as a part of the two part "Racial Prejudice in Jazz;" "Racial Prejudice in Jazz", *Down Beat*, 15 March 1962, 21.



Gitler was especially critical of the nationalist philosophy that appeared to guide Lincoln's creative interpretation of the musical material on *Straight Ahead* and her overall participation within the struggle. Equating Lincoln's nationalist beliefs with those of the avowed anti-white Nation of Islam, Gitler chastised Lincoln for alienating her white listeners. Gitler cited Lincoln's remarks regarding the social meaning behind Billie Holiday's *Left Alone*, which suggested that the song's social meaning held relevance. Partially quoting Lincoln, Gitler wrote, "When referring to Miss Holiday's *Left Alone*, Miss Lincoln is quoted as saying, 'In a way, all these tunes are about Billie...they're about all of us.'" Gitler argued that because all of the musicians on the recording date, and therefore in the studio, were black, then Lincoln, through her comments, was consciously excluding white America from identifying with *Left Alone*. The passage that Gitler used to argue that Lincoln espoused an anti-white nationalist stance was printed in *Straight Ahead*'s program notes. Ironically, in extracting this passage from the program notes to evidence his case against Lincoln, Gitler seemed to have overlooked that fact he was actually quoting Nat Hentoff quoting Lincoln, meaning that Hentoff was in the room when Lincoln spoke these words and was therefore apart of Lincoln's "Us."<sup>348</sup>

Gitler's review of *Straight Ahead* and critique of Lincoln's politics initiated a small firestorm of controversy within the jazz world regarding the issues of racial difference within jazz and the appropriateness of using jazz as an organ of political expression. In an effort to resolve the tension within the jazz community and forge a common ground among its members *Down Beat*'s editors, Bill Coss and Don DeMichael organized a panel discussion to address issues related to race and jazz in early spring 1962, and invited Abbey Lincoln, Max Roach, Nat Hentoff, Ira Gitler, Don Ellis

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<sup>348</sup> "Racial Prejudice in Jazz," 21.

(trumpeter), and Lalo Schiffrin (pianist) to the magazine's office to "air the situation."

The transcript of the group's panel discussion was published in March as a two part series, titled "Racial Prejudice in Jazz," and "Racial Prejudice in Jazz Part II," in *Down Beat*.

The series has become one of the most famous conversations within jazz history. A variety of scholars have examined the "Racial Prejudice in Jazz" conversations and have made a range of insights regarding the jazz community and jazz culture during the early 1960s. Analyzing the panel discussion to reveal how contentious debates surrounding race became within jazz during the early 1960s Ingrid Monson's recent assessment has provided one of the most thorough overviews of the entire conversation. Monson divided their dialogue into six broad areas of discussion, including; "whether Lincoln was 'exploiting' her blackness to further her career, social versus biological versus social explanations of cultural and musical difference, the musical quality of *Straight Ahead* versus its political content, whether reverse racism or 'Crow-Jim' existed in the jazz world, who was entitled to evaluate or speak about jazz and the black experience, and whether integration was an unproblematic social goal."<sup>349</sup>

My objective in analyzing the "Jazz and Racial Prejudice" dialogue here is not to simply resummarize the discussion. My goal, rather, is to reframe the dialogue as another moment in the sustained effort to keep the Black Liberation Struggle in the eyes, minds, and ears, of consumers turning to jazz for recreation. Specific conversations regarding the oppression of African Americans' social and political rights as well as the goals and philosophies of black political activism factored prominently in the panel

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<sup>349</sup> Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 240; for additional analysis of the "Jazz and Racial Prejudice" panel discussion also see Eric Porter, *What is this Thing Called Jazz*, 2002.

discussion's transcript, which occupied eleven full pages of the magazine. The critical point in this regard less that the panel discussion occurred, but more importantly that the conversation unfolded, through the publication of its transcripts, before the reading public. Not only did the article give readers a chance to consider conflicting sides of a debate centered on race, jazz, and politics, the panel participants additionally pulled the magazine's readership and—the jazz audience at large—into their dialogue by commenting directly on how jazz listeners might interpret their fellow panel participants' views and actions. The published transcript prompted readers to contemplate how they figured into the debate and what relationship they had to African American's struggle for liberation.

The transcript began with Lincoln arguing the point that Gitler's review was less about the music *Straight Ahead* presented and more a negative critique of Lincoln's identity as a socio-political activist and the philosophical underpinnings of her political consciousness. Gitler responded that his comments on Lincoln's politics were justified because, in his opinion, Lincoln was consciously exploiting her identity as a black woman as a way to increase record sales. In that context, Gitler claimed, the term "Professional Negro" was a fitting characterization of Lincoln's behavior. Lincoln responded to Gitler's charge arguing, "Exploit a career? How can I sing as a black woman, if I don't exploit the fact that I'm Negro." Gitler countered, "Yes, but I thought that you were over doing it, because the whole tone of the album was just one way." In other words Gitler's perception of *Straight Ahead* as having heavy nationalist overtones legitimized his use of the term.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> "Racial Prejudice in Jazz," 21.

Gitler's defense of his use of the term "Professional Negro" was telling. Gitler did not immediately challenge Lincoln's use of jazz as a vehicle for political expression in general. The political mobilization of jazz became problematic only when political ideals were expressed with a nationalist inflection. Many white Americans in the early 1960s saw black nationalism as a threat. Black Nationalism became synonymous with anti-white racism in the minds of many white Americans. Their understanding of the concept had been shaped by the 1959 broadcast of *The Hate that Hate Produced*, a documentary profiling the nationalist Nation of Islam and the United African Nationalist Movement. Historian Peniel Joseph has described how the anti-nationalist bias of the documentary projected a skewed image of "black nationalists as obscure counterparts to the racist southern White Citizens Council."<sup>351</sup> In Gitler's mind Lincoln's bringing Black Nationalism into the jazz community also signaled her desire to force him out of the community. The tension between Lincoln and Gitler in the opening exchange set the tone for the remainder of the conversation. On one side Lincoln, Roach, and Hentoff tried to keep the conversation centered on African Americans' collective struggle to overcome racial oppression within the United States, and how jazz music related to that effort. On the other side Gitler, DeMichael, and Coss tried to narrow the scope of the discussion to a limited focus on the nature of race relations within the jazz community alone. The title that DeMichael and Coss created for the published transcript hinted towards their desire to limit the conversation's scope. As Monson has noted the trio of white critics had strong self-interest in isolating jazz from the larger liberation struggle. If nationalism was the philosophical direction in which the liberation struggle was

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<sup>351</sup> Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 20, 21-24.

headed, and if the nationalist leaning movement developed a strong presence within jazz, then their future participation within the jazz community would, according to their logic, be threatened. A tug-o-war over the discussion's primary topic developed as each camp tried to pull the conversation in the direction of their interests.<sup>352</sup>

Nat Hentoff made clear his understanding of jazz as a part of the larger struggle for liberation unfolding across the American south. *Straight Ahead*, in his opinion, represented the cultural dimension of the rising wave of non-violent direct action activism. In reference to the album Hentoff suggested that "It's is all apart of a radically changed social context, and I think it would be totally unrealistic, aside from aesthetic judgments, to expect musicians today not to include everything they think and feel in the music." He argued that the blues lyrics from older generations had also reflected a sense of political consciousness. The only difference between the work of Lincoln and Roach and past blues musicians was that the current "social context" had become defined by overt mass activism. Hentoff declared that jazz was "no longer background music for drinking." Gitler defensively responded, "I never thought it was." Hentoff replied, "No, but most people did, and most of the public attitude towards jazz had been that. That is one of the reasons why there's been such a shock in this kind of work—in things like *Freedom Now Suite* or Abbey's album or Max's on Impulse." Lincoln added, "All art must be propaganda; all art must have an attitude; and all art must reflect the times you live in." This exchange between Hentoff, Gitler, and Lincoln marked one of several moments in the discussion that directly summoned the perspectives of the jazz audience at large. By referencing the general listening public's "attitude toward jazz" Hentoff made the jazz audience an active part of the dialogue. Readers had to consider whether

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<sup>352</sup> Monson, 246-247.

Hentoff's remarks regarding how "most people" understood the social functionality of jazz music reflected the ways they actually listened to the music and interpreted its social meaning and purpose. In doing so readers had to acknowledge the growing relationship between jazz music and African-American political activism.<sup>353</sup>

Roach and Lincoln refocused the conversation on Gitler's use of the term "Professional Negro." The both saw Gitler's use of the label as an assault upon Lincoln's ability to use her artistic voice to speak out against the racial injustices black Americans faced and her ability to acknowledge their efforts to overcome those injustices. Don Ellis also questioned whether Gitler's use of the phrase signaled his disdain for black activism in general. Trying to get Gitler to clarify his position Ellis remarked that "I get the feeling that you objected to, not just in Abbey's case, but in any case in general, to using some sort of a—what can I say?—to the Negro Movement and the feelings of a Negro. You seem to object to this as a basis for art." In response Gitler reaffirmed his position that his use of the phrase was solely a reaction to the nationalist overtones of the album. Further explaining his reaction Gitler stated, "I felt she was leaning too much on her Negritude in this Album," and explained, "I said Elijah Muhammad type of thinking and only implied by that I don't want a separation of black and white. I want to keep the two together in jazz." The last sentence of Gitler's response again signaled his desire to isolate the jazz community from the Black Liberation Struggle affecting the lives of many musicians and listeners alike. Gitler wanted to maintain the jazz world's integrity as a social and cultural space blind towards racial difference, and in doing so the jazz community would likewise fail to acknowledge the effect that racial disparities existent within broader American society had upon the lives of jazz community members.

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<sup>353</sup> "Racial Prejudice in Jazz," 22.

Defending the position that the jazz world could not be separated from the dynamics of American culture at large Roach raised the point that racial antagonism was, "...the social problem of this country." Gitler's statement and Roach's response highlighted again the tension between the respective creative and critic sides of the dialogue related to how the scope of the conversation should be framed, jazz as a part of the universal black experience which was in the process of being redefined by African-American political activism, versus the idea of a jazz community detached from the broader social, cultural, and political landscape of the nation, and trying to quickly and independently resolve its own issues related race.<sup>354</sup>

Don DeMichael assertively challenged Lincoln's opinion that all art be propaganda as the discussion progressed. Both DeMichael and Gitler were uncomfortable with the idea of using jazz to try to accomplish social objectives. The critics were opposed the strategic use of jazz music to spread the reach of the liberation struggle. Lincoln cleverly inverted their anti-propaganda argument and charged Gitler, through his review of *Straight Ahead*, with propagandizing the reading public to condemn Lincoln's political stance. Lincoln argued, "But, Ira, your article was the epitome of propaganda because you said to the general public—the people who read this magazine—watch out for Abbey Lincoln because, first, she doesn't like white people, she believes in separate states." An accusation to which Lincoln responded, "I'm not that idiotic that I'd dislike people because of the color of their skin." Lincoln summoned again the jazz audience and their perspectives as active parts of the discussion. Lincoln asked jazz fans reading and discussing the transcript to reflect upon how Gitler's review influenced their perception of Lincoln, her politics, and the nature of the larger liberation

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<sup>354</sup> "Racial Prejudice in Jazz," 23.

struggle in which she and her music were actively involved. Lincoln's comments also urged readers to rethink their understanding of Black Nationalism and question whether the premise that suggested pride in black identity necessarily meant an anti-white racial bias was flawed.<sup>355</sup>

DeMichael took advantage of the mention of anti-white racism as a tenant of Black Nationalism to pivot the conversation towards a discussion of "Crow-Jim," a term unique to the jazz community and specifically referenced the issue of reverse-discrimination practices in which black musicians leading performance ensembles refused to hire white sidemen on account of race. In doing so DeMichael steered the conversation away from the general discussion of race and racial oppression in America, which *Straight Ahead* spoke out against, to narrowed focus on race and jazz alone. By taking the conversation in this direction DeMichael essentially quarantined the liberation struggle from the jazz community. Indeed, as the term "Crow-Jim" suggested issues concerning racial prejudice in jazz portrayed circumstances in which white jazz musicians were victimized by those black bandleaders controlling the flow of opportunity. The discussion of Crow-Jim as a legitimate issue seemed to rhetorically cancel-out the validity of the struggle. Roach attempted to re-expand the focus of the discussion to the structural racial disparity with in the United States by arguing that the racialized structural dynamics of American society were responsible for the Crow-Jim phenomenon. Based on the premise that jazz was an element of African-American folk culture Roach argued that because of America's rigid social de jure and de facto segregation African American musicians had greater exposure to jazz and were therefore more likely to develop into the type of jazz musicians that black bandleaders sought to

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<sup>355</sup> "Racial Prejudice in Jazz," 24.



hire. The tension regarding how to frame the scope of the conversation between the two camps did not subside as the dialogue continued to its conclusion.

The reader response to the two-part conversation printed in the March 15<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> issues of *Down Beat* was overwhelming. Enough letters were submitted in response to the series that the editors of the magazine dedicated the entire “Chords and Discords” column of the May 10<sup>th</sup> issue, where reader letters were printed, to surveying the various positions of their readership. As a preface to this issue’s column the editors printed, “No other *Down Beat* feature in recent years caused as much reader comment as did the two-part discussion Racial Prejudice in Jazz.”<sup>356</sup> While the editors explained to readers they did not have the space to re-print all letters sent in they did claim that they had published a representative sample reflecting the diversity of responses. The eleven letters that *Down Beat* did re-print reflected a polarized readership in their opinions concerning the politicization of their coveted leisure space.

Of the letters published five seem to have had positive reactions to the series. G. Zygmunt of Seattle “thought the convocation to discuss reciprocal race prejudice topically interesting.” Zygmunt challenged Gitler’s labeling of Abbey Lincoln as a “Professional Negro” and humorously suggested that of all involved, such a title more appropriately fitted the activism of Nat Hentoff. Finally, Zygmunt appreciated Lincoln’s awareness of her racial identity and pride in it. George Goodman of Los Angeles challenged Gitler’s dismissal of Pan-African Black Nationalism in his controversy generating review. Goodman commented that Gitler’s “...remark in his review that African Negroes don’t give a fig about American Negroes” had him “stumped.” Goodman articulately suggested that Gitler did not have the evidence to make such an

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<sup>356</sup> “Chords and Discords,” *Down Beat* 10 May 1962, 5.

assertion. Lennie Metcalf of New York praised the magazine for bringing this dialogue to its readers. Somewhat pessimistic, Metcalf hoped that such a conversation would lead the jazz world to act in positive directions. Metcalf wrote, "I would like to see some good come of the discussion, but from the way it is going, I doubt it." Joel Whitebook also praised *Down Beat* for bringing this conversation to readers. He suggested that "it [was] the most enlightening article that [he] had ever read." Whitebook thought that the opinions of Gitler and Lincoln were extreme but he wrote that he could empathize with Lincoln's stance. Finally, West Germany's Rainer Blome agreed with the stance Roach took in relation to the discussion of art and propaganda. Blome offered, "Max Roach was right when he said an artist is a propaganda organ, namely for his own art."<sup>357</sup>

The readers who expressed negative reactions to the conversation made their distain known with a biting sting. Gay Eddson of Ft. Wayne, Indiana struck personally at Lincoln. In poor taste he suggested "Miss Lincoln quite obviously makes an attempt to be as unattractive as possible in order to emphasize the poor black woman (her words) in an effort to disguise her own personal insecurity and misguided race pride. Gay Eddson's opinion that Lincoln was performing as a poor black woman suggest that he likely appreciated Gitler's claim that Lincoln was indeed a "Professional Negro." Eddson also submitted that Lincoln's "opinions and attitudes are not winning her many fans, Negro or White." Michael N. Berger of Pittsburgh found little value in the dialogue as he expressed that he, "...was particularly unimpressed by the fuzzy thinking exhibited by almost everyone concerned." Berger additionally countered Blome's response concerning art and propaganda. Challenging Blome Berger wrote, "Art is rarely propaganda, and propaganda is even more rarely art." New York jazz critic Dan

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<sup>357</sup> "Chords and Discords," *Down Beat* 10 May 1962, 5.

Morgenstern's letter to *Down Beat* was the longest printed. Self-identifying as a "European-Born Jew," Morgenstern was critical of the socio-political expressions of Roach and Lincoln's albums. He wrote, "Not once did I get the feeling from Max and Abbey that jazz was something they enjoyed creating." Morgenstern not only co-signed on Gitler's use of the term "Professional Negro" but he additionally extended the title to Roach. He also reinforced Berger's stance on art and propaganda as he commented "Jazz isn't propaganda or a vehicle for second hand African Nationalism or a manifestation of social unrest," directly challenging the legitimacy of Roach and Lincoln's marketing protest. Morgenstern was also critical of Hentoff as he proclaimed that he desired to be spared from entertaining Hentoff's belief that social protest could be appropriately expressed in jazz. The tone and essence of Morganstern's remarks suggested that he believed that African Americans should use jazz to passively demonstrate to America that they were worthy of equality as opposed to using jazz to directly assert racial pride and demands for social inclusion. Tom Palmer of East St. Louis complained that he did not "...care to have a magazine I subscribe to devote nearly all of two issues to an open discussion between eight people, all of whom have little to offer in the way of solution." Apparently Palmer did not appreciate the politicization of his leisure space. In the most concise and direct response Bob Yeager asserted that in his "...opinion both Abbey Lincoln and Max Roach should confine themselves to singing and drumming respectively and shut up about this racial business." Despite the transformative powers that reviews bestowed upon the records of Roach and Lincoln, Bob Yeager was not affected. The reactions contained in the letters submitted by the readers of both *Metronome* and *Down Beat* demonstrate that socio-political actions of Roach and Lincoln were significant and

influential in their ability to engage others, prompting them to re-act, regardless of the positions these reactions took.

### ***The Freedom Rider and Blue Note Records***

The 1960 student sit-in movement was not the only instance of non-violent direct action protest drawing musicians, producers, and critics into the liberation struggle. The 1961 Freedom Rides helped transform jazz drummer and bandleader Art Blakey into a grassroots socio-political activist. Inspired by the courage and commitment of the freedom riders Blakey was compelled to record an overtly politically conscious album that could help spread awareness of the freedom riders and their struggle. The May 1961 Freedom Rides were organized by CORE and were designed to test the south's compliance with the Supreme Court's ruling in *Boynton v. Virginia* (1960), which banned the use of segregated facilities in rail and bus terminals. Led by CORE National Director James Farmer, an interracial group of non-violent activists boarded two buses in Washington, DC on May 4<sup>th</sup> destined for New Orleans. The group resolved to personally test whether southern bus terminals would comply with federal law. An enraged mob of local white citizens, violently committed to maintaining the Jim Crow social order, greeted the first bus with firebombs as the freedom riders neared the city of Anniston, Alabama. The riders narrowly escaped as the bus exploded in flames. The second bus was met by an equally violent and aggressive mob of segregationist whites armed with baseball bats, metal pipes, and bicycle chains as it pulled into Birmingham, Alabama. The second group of freedom riders were beaten and assaulted while the local police department intentionally delayed their arrival to tame the mob. The strong degree of

violent reaction initially led James Farmer to end the campaign and cut the trip short.

Diane Nash, head of the Nashville SNCC contingent urged Farmer to stay the course and agreed to send fresh reinforcements to replace those who were injured.

As the newly combined group of CORE and SNCC activists pulled out of Birmingham headed towards Montgomery Art Blakey entered Rudy Van Gelder's Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey studio on May 27<sup>th</sup> 1961. Blakey celebratively responded to the freedom riders' bravery and grit in the form of a powerful and moving drum solo whose intensity matched the activists' resolve to maintain the momentum of the liberation struggle. Blakey could personally identify with the trauma the Freedom Riders experienced. In the 1940s he had been viciously beaten by white police officers in Albany, Georgia for violating southern segregated transportation policies. Blakey was traveling through the south on a bus with a white fellow musician in order to join Fletcher Henderson's big band while on tour. The brutal attack left Blakey with a steel plate in his head and an experience with southern racism that he would never forget. Similar to Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln, Blakey used "The Freedom Rider" as a way to add a cultural dimension to the non-violent direct action movement strategy.<sup>358</sup>

The seven minute and twenty-nine second solo powerfully captured the gravity of the moment. Blakey's solo opened with a roaring symbol crash followed by a slow and unsettling crescendoing drum roll; a sequence which repeated itself six times to create a tension filled aural atmosphere. After the repetitious dialogue between the crashing symbol and drum roll ended Blakey's solo exploded with his characteristic fiery and energetic playing. "The Freedom Rider" had a hard driving tempo whose pace was

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<sup>358</sup> Arthur Taylor, *Notes and Tones: Musician-to-Musician Interviews* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 240.

established by Blakey's relentless use of the high hat symbol. Listening to the song's tempo one cannot help feeling the sense of immediacy in which Blakey wished to communicate. Blakey used that tempo to set the tone of the improvisational percussive statements that he made. While his cadences contained a strong soul jazz groove his drum strikes seemed to reflect the violence the freedom riders faced. Faint traces of Blakey's anguish filled moans, faintly heard during the rests between drum strikes, added both a sense of solemnity and cathartic transcendence to the song. Blakey's "The Freedom Rider" was packaged with four other songs featuring the entire Jazz Messengers quintet, recorded on the same day, when the album *The Freedom Rider* was commercially released.

*The Freedom Rider's* album cover image mirrored the tension and sense of seriousness conveyed in Blakey's solo. Reid Miles, whose visual artistry helped transform Blue Note album covers into iconic images within jazz culture, designed *The Freedom Rider's* cover. Miles' design featured the celebrated candid shot photography of Blue Note co-owner Francis Wolff. Wolff's sepia hued photograph of Art Blakey was stretched across the album's entire cover. The candid image displayed Blakey hard at work seated behind his drum set. Wolff's use of light and shadow made Blakey appear to be emerging from darkness. Blakey's facial expression, with a signature cigarette dangling from the right corner of his mouth, revealed a musician deep in meditative thought, suggestive of his emotional attachment to the music he was creating. Next to Blakey's image, printed in large, bold, capital letters, was the album's title, "THE FREEDOM RIDER." Printed in dark pink, the album's title boldly stood out from the rest of the black and sepia cover capturing onlooker's eyes. *The Freedom Rider's* cover

and its use in advertisements for the album had the potential to draw those who viewed the album and advertisements for it into engagement with the liberation struggle. The album's cover created instances in which those who viewed it had to consider who the freedom riders were, the meaning behind their activism, and how Blakey's jazz musically expressed the activists' sentiments.

Nat Hentoff was fittingly selected to compose *The Freedom Rider's* program notes. Hentoff had been vocal in his support for the Freedom Riders in the jazz press. Shortly after Blakey recorded the album Hentoff praised the Freedom Riders in an August 1961 *Metronome* editorial. He acknowledged their effort to "accelerate non-token integration." And, by testing southern states' compliance with federal authority, Hentoff recognized their endeavor to prevent southern states from using a states' rights discourse as a veiled means of suppressing the civil rights of United States citizens, including the rights of organized labor.<sup>359</sup> Hentoff's outspoken support for the liberation struggle within the jazz world, however, was not without criticism. Allen Johnson, an African American musician from Bridgeport, Connecticut, sent a response to Hentoff's editorial, published in *Metronome's* October 1961 issue, in which he declared,

One thing displeases me to no end. That thing is Nat Hentoff's appointing himself the savior of the colored race. As a colored musician I feel I have a right to tell Mr. Hentoff that he does more harm than good. He makes heroes out of the Freedom Riders. Has Mr. Hentoff ever lived in the South? If he had he'd know this action isn't helping our cause a bit...His 'pressure' type of writing makes enemies for our race and divides us from white musicians.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Nat Hentoff, "More Claims and Consonances," *Metronome*, August 1961, 18

<sup>360</sup> Allen Johnson, "Not Pleased with Nat," *Metronome*, October 1961, 2.

Allen Johnson did not oppose the goals of civil rights activism. He hoped that American society would successfully integrate. Johnson opposed the non-violent direct action tactics that civil rights activists were using. He favored the pre-WWII NAACP led integrationist strategy of filing law suites and appealing to the minds of intelligent southerners. Johnson's remarks suggested that not all African Americans supported the Black Liberation Struggle's shift towards relying upon non-violent direct action and that participation in the struggle was, in some instances, contested upon racial lines. More importantly, Johnson's concern for how Hentoff's statements were fomenting racial divisions among jazz musicians revealed how threatening the liberation struggle's presence within the jazz community was for some. Johnson, who as a practicing jazzman likely recognized the financial value associated with maintaining good working relationships with his white counterparts who could offer access to work opportunities, did not want to rock the figurative boat.

Hentoff's program notes accomplished what Johnson and others like him hoped to avoid. Hentoff's prose, printed on *The Freedom Rider's* back cover, illuminated a clear link between the struggle and jazz. Hentoff explained how Blakey's youthful and fiery playing on "The Freedom Rider" captured the intensity of the Civil Rights phase of the struggle. Hentoff wrote, "[“The Freedom Rider”] illustrates how Blakey's intensity reaches out to absorb the climatic present history: because “The Freedom Rider,” recorded, as was the rest of this date on May 27, 1961, represents Art's immediate reaction to the explosive growth of the civil rights movement at that time and since.”<sup>361</sup> Hentoff placed the extended drum solo, and the rest of the album, in historical context as he recounted the development of the non-violent direct action phase of the struggle and

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<sup>361</sup> Nat Hentoff, “Program Notes,” *The Freedom Rider*, Blue Note Records 4156.



how the freedom rides fit in to this new wave of activism. Hentoff suggested that Blakey's playing emotionally captured the "winds of change" sweeping across the country. He also persisted that, "the solo swarms with defiance of racism and pride in the persistence of 'the movement' to end segregation through mass, direct action."<sup>362</sup> According to Hentoff, Blakey's playing on "The Freedom Rider" was a form of direct action protest itself, spreading the movement's message and its conviction across the market for recorded music.

Similar to *We Insist!* and *Straight Ahead*, *The Freedom Rider* needed the cooperation of a recording label to make its way into marketplace for recorded music and subsequently extend the reach of civil rights activism. The famed Blue Note Records distributed the socio-political statements that Blakey and Hentoff respectively made in the music and prose on the album's back cover. Unlike the startup subsidiary that Candid Records was, Blue Note had been actively recording jazz since the late 1930s. Alfred Lion, a German Jewish immigrant, and Max Margulis had officially incorporated Blue Note in 1939 in New York State. Margulis, a writer by trade, injected the initial capital investment in the enterprise while Lion's discerning ear for quality jazz supervised the label's recording sessions. Lion's appreciation for jazz, especially African American produced hot jazz, stretched back to his childhood in Berlin. Lion's enthusiasm for black hot jazz was reflected in Blue Note's recording agenda. In the early 1940s Francis Wolff, a childhood friend of Lion's, abandoned Nazi Germany and joined Lion in mapping the creative direction of Blue Note's musical catalogue and in doing so, initiated one of the

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<sup>362</sup> Hentoff, "Program Notes," *The Freedom Rider*.

most celebrated non-musical partnerships in jazz history. By 1946 Lion and Wolff had supervised forty-nine recording sessions.<sup>363</sup>

Lion and Wolff provided a recording environment that allowed musicians to thrive. Horace Silver, who recorded for Blue Note for nearly thirty years appreciated the creative freedom that Lion and Wolff allowed their artists. Reflective of the opinions of many of Blue Note's jazz artists Silver commented that, "The recording scene is very good at Blue Note. They treat me very well, and let me record what I want. We draw up a contract, we talk it over and I tell them what I want."<sup>364</sup> Blue Note's recording environment was conducive for a musician like Blakey looking to use jazz music to make an overt political statement.

For Blakey's political message to be effective in spreading the reach of the struggle Blue Note not only had to be willing to record *The Freedom Rider* but they also had to be willing to assume the risk of placing the album in the marketplace. The risk associated with placing Blakey's overtly politically conscious album in the marketplace stemmed from the potential backlash from critics and jazz consumers unsympathetic to black America's struggle for equality. Not long after Blakey and the Jazz Messengers recorded *The Freedom Rider* Abbey Lincoln and Max Roach were chastised in the press for incorporating political ideology into their music, something that Lion and Wolff likely would have taken note of. Negative reactions to controversial music had a negative impact upon profitability.

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<sup>363</sup> Ricard Cook, *Blue Note Records* (Boston: Justin Charles & Co., 2003), 6-13, 20.

<sup>364</sup> Cook, *Blue Note Records*, 118; Silver has also noted the recording conditions Blue Note provided in his autobiography *Let's Get to the Nitty Gritty: The Autobiography of Horace Silver* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 138.

The three-year lag between the recording and the release of *The Freedom Rider* significantly diminished Blue Note's exposure to the financial risk tied to using jazz as an agent of political change. While the album was recorded in May 1961 it was not released until summer 1964. *The Freedom Rider* was not reviewed in *Down Beat* until June 1964 and advertisements for the album did not appear until July 1964. It is difficult to assess the reason Lion and Wolff chose to shelve *The Freedom Rider*. One could, however, make an argument that the partners delayed the album's release to avoid a backlash against the label for its role in producing Blakey's project. First, Blue Note generally had a conservative, risk-adverse business culture, especially in regard to the music it released. Blue Note biographer Richard Cook, describing the label's recording philosophy during the era of the bebop revolution, characterized Blue Note's approach to recording and releasing music as "intelligent conservatism." As opposed to recording and releasing modern jazz—a lightning rod of contentious debate—Lion and Wolff maintained their focus on recording high quality big band hot jazz, a style with a greater likelihood of financial return. Blue Note did not begin to record modern jazz until its first recording session with pianist and bebop pioneer Thelonious Monk in October 1947, a point when modern jazz was becoming apart of the jazz mainstream and less controversial.<sup>365</sup> Similar to modern jazz in the early 1940s, using jazz to make overtly politically conscious statements was a new trend in the early 1960s. Lion and Wolff may have wanted to delay the release of the *The Freedom Rider* to see how the marketplace would respond to the politically conscious albums already in circulation. Blue Note's business conservatism was also reflected in their delay in switching to the Long Playing (LP) record format. The LP format extended the playing time of an album to approximately

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<sup>365</sup> Cook, 16-17, 23.

fifty minutes in length, while the 78 format, which had been the industry standard, limited an album's playing time to approximately four minutes. The LP format was ideal for recording modern jazz because it allowed the playing time needed to capture musicians' extended improvised solos. While recording giant Columbia Records was successfully using the LP format to distribute music in 1948, Blue Note did not switch to the LP format until 1951. According to Cook Blue Note clung to the 78 format out of concern for the start-up costs associated with making the formatting transition. Blue Note's business decisions were made with an eye towards how they would effect the bottom-line and overall profitability.<sup>366</sup>

Also suggestive that Lion and Wolff may have consciously delayed releasing *The Freedom Rider* to minimize financial risk was the fact that, relative to Blakey's Blue Note discography, the album was released out of order. The two recording sessions that Blakey led for Blue Note after *The Freedom Rider* session, *Buhaina's Delight* (recorded November 28<sup>th</sup> and December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1961) and *The African Beat* (recorded January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1962) were both released before *The Freedom Rider*.<sup>367</sup> Finally, *The Freedom Rider* was released into political climate where consensus regarding civil rights issues had expanded within America's representative democracy. Again, the first advertisement for *The Freedom Rider* appeared in *Down Beat's* July 2<sup>nd</sup> issue, which was the same day President Lyndon Johnson signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act into law. The political climate had shifted between 1961 and 1964. The tone Blakey's and Hentoff's political

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<sup>366</sup> Cook, 38-39.

<sup>367</sup> The order in which albums were released into the market was reflected in each album's sequence number within its production series. All three albums were apart of Blue Note's 4000 series. *Buhaina's Delight's* series number was 4104 and *The African Beat's* series number was 4097, while *The Freedom Rider's* series number was 4156. Blue Note had recorded and released around fifty albums between the time that the *The Freedom Rider* was recorded and first became visible within the marketplace.

outspokenness was less confrontational in 1964. Releasing the album in this climate significantly mitigated the potential for a consumer backlash against Blue Note. Released when it was, *The Freedom Rider* played like a nostalgic celebration of the battles civil rights movement participants fought now that the movement was achieving its goals. *The Freedom Rider*'s delayed release also dimmed the power and immediacy of the political messages the album conveyed. Compared to ways critics and fans vocally reacted to the appearance of *We Insist!* and *Straight Ahead* in the marketplace, *The Freedom Rider*'s entrance into the marketplace was accompanied by relative silence, especially in regard to the album's overt political overtones. *Down Beat*'s June 1964 review of *The Freedom Rider* completely failed to acknowledge the album's political dimensions. The review, in critiquing Blakey's extended solo for readers, actually removed the word "freedom" from the song's title and used only the word "Rider" to identify the tune.<sup>368</sup>

While Blue Note might have avoided marketplace backlash by delaying *The Freedom Rider*'s release, Hentoff, Roach, Lincoln and Blakey were not as fortunate. Their activism was not without consequences. By the end of 1961 *Down Beat* reported, "Candid throws in the towel." While Archie Bleyer gave Hentoff the freedom to privilege quality and creativity over profitability in planning Candid's recording agenda, he did require that the upstart jazz label earn enough revenue to break even on its expenses. Hentoff and Candid were given two years to become self-sustaining. In late December 1961 *Down Beat* told its readership that, "money and time ran out." The two-year upstart jazz subsidiary of Cadence Records was going out of business. While *We Insist!*, *Straight Ahead*, and Candid's other albums were successful turning the jazz

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<sup>368</sup> H.P. "Record Review: Art Blakey, The Freedom Rider," *Down Beat*, 18 June 1964.

community's attention to Black America's civil rights concerns they ultimately failed to find their way into the homes of music consumers. Candid's records might have forced the marketplace to acknowledge the overt political messages they carried, but they could not woo consumers to actually purchase the music. Hentoff noted how Candid's disregard for commercialism contributed to the label's demise. He explained how his vision for building Candid's repertoire was founded on establishing a "line founded on durability" and "avoiding quick trends." Abbey Lincoln was blackballed from recording for her contributions toward raising the jazz community's awareness of Black America's fight for freedom, opportunity, and equality. Twelve years passed before Lincoln recorded another jazz album. The vocalist acknowledged how her reputation as a nationalist hindered her career. Roach and Blakey were not subjected to the informal recording sanction that Lincoln experienced for their political outspokenness. They were, however, accused of implementing anti-white discriminatory practices in their roles as bandleaders hiring sidemen for their groups. Both were labeled as subscribers to a "Crow-Jim" philosophy.<sup>369</sup>

### ***A Jazz Salute to Freedom and CORE***

Despite the backlash that artists like Roach, Lincoln, and Blakey experienced as a consequence of using their music to market protest, the strategy of action they initiated spread within the civil rights movement wave of the liberation struggle. The Congress of Racial Equality followed in the footsteps of the jazz artists turned political activists and

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<sup>369</sup> "Candid Throw's in the Towel," *Down Beat*, 21 December 1961, 13; Porter, 149, 180; Monson, 253-254; "Top Musicians Divided on Racial Unity, Prejudice in Jazz World," *The Chicago Defender*, 20 April 1963, 10.

adopted the protest strategy they created at the grassroots level. In late 1963 and early 1964 CORE spearheaded the creation of *A Jazz Salute to Freedom*, an overtly politically conscious jazz album, and through their efforts to distribute that record within the market for recorded music, they continued to spread the reach of the struggle, its philosophy, and its goals.

CORE's leadership believed in the value that jazz potentially held as a political resource that could be mobilized on behalf of the struggle. James Farmer Jr., CORE's National Director, while discussing CORE's goals of promoting black creative expression, once suggested, "And we will make the American music, the Negro music, which is jazz, as Americans, as Negroes. We will be for ourselves, but not only for ourselves, for America, for mankind. And all of this is possible because we are making ourselves free."<sup>370</sup> Jazz symbolized Farmer's vision for black Americans' relationship with the larger nation. The music had the ability to simultaneously express black Americans' unique racial identity and their sense of American Nationalism. Jazz was a working model for his philosophical understanding of integrationist ideology. The music was evidence of black Americans' ability to contribute to the nation, in this case through the arts, without sacrificing a sense of self, without having to compromise their cultural heritage and tradition. Jazz was an ideal vehicle to carry CORE's and the liberation struggle's message to new spaces.

*A Jazz Salute to Freedom* was initially conceived of as a fundraising project. CORE was well aware of jazz music's ability to generate revenue to fund civil rights activism. CORE had been a beneficiary of a half dozen jazz fundraising concerts between 1961 and 1963, including the revenue generating power of live performances of

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<sup>370</sup> James Farmer, *Freedom When?* (New York: Random House, 1965), 196.

Roach's *We Insist!*.<sup>371</sup> Marvin Rich and Val Colman spearheaded CORE's entrepreneurial endeavor. Rich was the Director of CORE's relatively new Community Relations department, and Colman was the department's Assistant Director. The department had been created in 1959 in an effort to make the civil rights organization's community outreach initiatives operate in a more efficient style, especially with respect to fundraising initiatives. Before the establishment of the Community Relations department fundraising had been a decentralized activity. Before 1959 CORE's local chapters were charged with the responsibility of soliciting contributions to funnel up to the New York headquarters office. *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* was the product of new organizational changes within CORE's operating structure that were designed to streamline its revenue generating activities.

The creation of *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* was a collaborative effort. The Congress of Racial Equality lacked the resources and knowledge needed to successfully produce recording sessions and develop albums. Nor had the civil rights organization any prior experience marketing and distributing music within the marketplace. The project was only made possible through the support and contributions of like-minded members and organizations within the jazz community. The jazz community provided CORE with the resources and expertise needed for *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* to have an influence in spreading awareness of the philosophies and goals of the struggle. Morris Levy, CEO of Roulette Records opened the catalogues of both Roulette and Roost Records—held by Roulette—to provide the album's musical material. In doing so Levy gave CORE the opportunity to include rare performances like the 1949 recording of the Machito big band featuring Harry Belafonte, a recording that would significantly increase

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<sup>371</sup> Monson, 191, 202-203.



collectors' interests in the album. Jazz impresario George Avakian penned the liner notes for the album, giving the record an official stamp of legitimacy from one of the jazz communities most reputable figures. Graphic designer Jerry Smokler created the albums cover. The thirty-one musicians featured on the album donate royalties back to CORE. Finally, Floyd S. Glinert, the Sales Manager of Columbia Records' Custom Record Division drafted the blueprint for an extensive marketing campaign. James Farmer Jr. took care to remind the individuals contributing their time, resources and energy to the project of the importance of their work in personalized thank you letters. Farmer wrote to one Columbia Records official and described his "hope that the prison of segregation will open very soon" and that the official's "kind assistance will bring that moment closer."<sup>372</sup>

CORE's ability to use *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* to broaden the reach of civil rights activism differed from the earlier efforts to market protest that used the pre-existing network of retail outlets across the nation to circulate politically conscious albums. CORE initially relied on its local chapters and mail/phone orders coming into the headquarters to manage *A Jazz Salute to Freedom*'s distribution. Retail record shops did express an interest in stocking the overtly politically conscious album on their shelves, especially as awareness and consumer interest in the album grew. Retailers from as near as Washington, DC and as far as Stockholm wrote to CORE and requested allocations of album to sell in their stores. CORE, however, had made an agreement with

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<sup>372</sup> Russ Wilson, "A Jazz Salute to Freedom," *Oakland Tribune*, 27 October 1963 found in the Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967 (microfilm, series 5, reel 32), State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Letter from James Farmer to Morris Baumstein, July 10, 1963, Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967 (microfilm, series 5, reel 32), State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Morris Levy to keep the album out of retail stores. Levy wanted to prevent stores from turning a profit on the musical commodity that he was donating to the struggle for free.<sup>373</sup>

*A Jazz Salute to Freedom*'s sales campaign began in September 1963. Colman initially described the campaign as a "fundraising program" for the chapters. According to the program's structure the local chapters actually had to buy the albums from the headquarters office. The local chapters, however, only paid four dollars for the album. Then, in selling the record for five dollars local chapters would recover their initial expenses and earn an additional dollar to fund local branch activities. The national office only earned two dollars on each album's sale. The remaining two dollars of revenue were used to cover the program's expenses, which likely included the cost of the vinyl used to press the record.

Each chapter initially received two albums with the overview memo describing the campaign. Local chapters were instructed to take those albums to local radio stations in hopes that sympathetic disc jockey's would provide free advertising for the record and help grow public awareness of the record's availability. The disc jockeys would actually have to buy the album first. Colman's memo to the chapters noted that, "no one, but on one, including James Farmer gets the album for free." Local radio stations seemed to be supportive of the project. Valena Williams, the Public Service Director for Cleveland's Tiger Radio 1540, for example, wrote to Marvin Rich and requested promotional advertising materials after hearing about the campaign. Williams wrote that, "We [Tiger

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<sup>373</sup> Letter from Val Colman to Circle Music, February 10, 1964, Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967 (microfilm, series 5, reel 32), State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Letter from Hans Richter to Marvin Rich, November 11, 1963, Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967 (microfilm, series 5, reel 32), State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Letter from J.A. Lakjer to CORE, September 21, 1964, Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967 (microfilm, series 5, reel 32), State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Radio] would welcome the opportunity to help promote the sales locally.” Colman also peppered radio stations across the New York City metropolitan area with promotional copies of *A Jazz Salute to Freedom*. He conveniently included a pre-drafted spot announcement in the promotional package so that Disc Jockeys could advertise the record over the air. The spot announced that, “All of the profits go directly to CORE to help in the fight for racial justice.” Finally, Colman recommended that local chapters attempt to sell the record to audiences attending performances at local jazz clubs and host listening parties so that potential buyers could sample the quality of the music the record offered.<sup>374</sup>

The first two months of the sales campaign generated upwards of \$7,635 dollars of revenue. The majority of initial sales invoice came from CORE chapters within the New York metropolitan area. Orders placed by the local Detroit chapter, totaling \$3,450 dollars, accounted for nearly half of the early proceeds. The Boston, Cleveland, and Chicago chapters also placed sizable orders during the first months of the campaign. Two albums were even sent to the Reed College CORE chapter located in Portland, Oregon. Shipping records from the first few weeks of the campaign show that Columbia Records Productions—Columbia actually manufactured the album—shipped 5,000 copies of *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* to CORE’s New York based headquarters office, an amount representing a potential \$25,000 dollar revenue. Sales and distribution records from the campaign are incomplete but correspondence between CORE’s national office

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<sup>374</sup> “A Jazz Salute to Freedom: A Fund Raising Program for the CORE Chapters,” Memo from Val Colman to CORE Group Leaders, September 12, 1963, Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967 (microfilm, series 5, reel 32), State Historical Society of Wisconsin; “Spot Announcement: A Jazz Salute to Freedom,” Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967 (microfilm, series 5, reel 32), State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Letter from Valena Williams to Marvin Rich, October 8, 1963, Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967 (microfilm, series 5, reel 32), State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

and local chapters indicate that the record had been placed on backorder by November 1963. Chapters in Grand Forks, Baltimore, and Chicago were told that requested shipments would be delayed. Demand for *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* was quickly outpacing the record's available supply.<sup>375</sup>

The diminishing supply of available albums by early 1964 was likely rooted in CORE's November 1963 implementation of an expanded marketing plan that was designed to transform *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* into a nationally focused fundraising campaign. Floyd Glinert was the architect of the expanded marketing strategy. Glinert, the National Sales Manager for Columbia Records' Custom Records Division, had the expertise and experience needed to broaden efforts to sell the album beyond isolated, local markets. The goal of Glinert's plan was to increase visibility of *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* within the national market. Organized into ten key initiatives, the new plan built upon the structure of the marketing strategy first introduced by Rich in September and added several new tactics to better promote sales. Glinert's plan increased the potential for local market sales by getting members of CORE chapters, currently charged with selling the record in their communities, to also focus on door-to-door sales and letter writing campaigns to friends and associates. The new plan also suggested that

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<sup>375</sup> The \$7,635 dollar revenue figure was calculated using invoices charged to local CORE chapters from the national office dated in October 1963, Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967 (microfilm, series 5, reel 32), State Historical Society of Wisconsin; The 5,000 unit shipment figure was calculated using daily shipment records from Columbia Records dated in August and September 1963, Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967 (microfilm, series 5, reel 32), State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Letters from Mary Hernandez to John Preston, November 12, 1963, Jacquelyn Martin to CORE National Office, December 16, 1963, and Mary S. Edelen to James Farmer, January 10, 1964 discuss the album's low supply, Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967 (microfilm, series 5, reel 32), State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

CORE's local sales force make arrangements with local record stores to erect sales booths and sell directly to consumers in browsing the isles.<sup>376</sup>

While the new locally focused sales tactics had the potential to increase revenue, the nationally focused sales initiatives transformed *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* into a vehicle for marketing protest. The nationally focused initiatives expanded the album's, and the overt political messages it carried, reach beyond the boundaries of the civil rights organization's network of local chapters. These new initiatives provided CORE with an opportunity to take the liberation struggle's ideas to places and people it might not have reached alone. One of the new nationally focused marketing initiatives combined a print advertising campaign in national media outlets coupled with a mail order distribution plan. CORE and Columbia Records worked collaboratively to design an ad for the record that contained a pre-addressed order card that could be detached and mailed in, along with five dollars, to request a copy of *A Jazz Salute to Freedom*.

The advertising images used to promote the album in print media outlets featured the record's cover image. The image was crafted to conjure the image of the American flag in the minds of on-lookers. It featured red and white stripes and displayed a blue box in its upper corner. The parts of the image that were suggestive of the flag were set against an all black backdrop. In a way the color contrast between the red, white, blue, and black seemed to subliminally coax onlookers into contemplating the relationship between America and its black marginalized and oppressed citizens, the relationship at the very center of the liberation struggle.<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Letter from Floyd Glinert to Marvin Rich, October 30, 1963, Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967 (microfilm, series 5, reel 32), State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>377</sup> There are two styles of print advertisements that are documented in CORE's papers. Both versions of the Advertisement prominently display both the front and back cover of the record, Print Advertisement for

The print advertisement also carried a message written by Rich addressed to the “Friend[s] of CORE.” In the short note to potential consumers Rich described the album as a new and unique way to assist CORE in its efforts to dismantle Jim Crow. Rich wrote, “And yet most of your \$5 goes directly into the CORE treasury for such solely needed purposes as bailing out jailed demonstrators...conducting workshops in non-violent resistance to segregation...organizing Negro voter registration drives,” reminding the readers of the magazines, like *Billboard*, carrying the advertisement that civil rights demonstrators were actively being jailed and beaten in the name of freedom. Rich closed his statement with a subtle threat to those viewing the ad. Rich warned, “But hurry—this offer is good for a ‘limited time only.’ Not because we’re running out of albums—but because America is desperately short of time in which to find peaceful solutions to the problem of racial discrimination!,” implying that a “solution” would be found, non-violent or otherwise. Rich’s closing remark echoed the message that SNCC Chairman John Lewis had been prevented from sharing with audiences at the 1963 March on Washington. Lewis had intended to invoke the vivid language of revolution to describe how black America would “non-violently” burn Dixie to the ground as Sherman had done Atlanta during the Civil War. Feeling that the words were too powerful and provocative, Lewis’ counterparts in other leading civil rights organizations persuaded him to censor that portion of his speech. *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* gave Rich an opportunity and a platform to express ideas that Lewis could not.<sup>378</sup>

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*A Jazz Salute to Freedom*, Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967 (microfilm, series 5, reel 32), State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>378</sup> Print Advertisement for *A Jazz Salute to Freedom*, Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967 (microfilm, series 5, reel 32), State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Carson, 93-95.

Glinert's recommendation to promote *A Jazz Salute Freedom* as a potential Christmas gift businesses could give to employees and clients created another critical opportunity to expand the reach of the struggle. The Christmas gift initiative, targeted at the nation's largest employers, was designed to generate revenue through large bulk sales. CORE moved quickly to set this initiative in motion. James Farmer sent dozens of personally signed letters describing the fundraising project and its significance in furthering the goals of civil rights to business leaders across the United States including; Proctor & Gamble, General Motors, Bristol-Myers, American Home Products, Colgate Palmolive, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco, General Foods, Ford Motor Company, Warner Brothers Pictures, United Artists Corporation, S.C. Johnson & Sons, Philip Morris, Warner Lambert Pharmaceutical, Gillette, Campbell Soup Co., Lever Brothers Co., General Mills and the General Time, and others. *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* gave James Farmer and CORE an important opportunity to bring the liberation struggle from the streets of southern communities and the national mall into the executive offices of America's largest corporations, helping to make civil rights, as a national socio-political concern, inescapable and unavoidable.<sup>379</sup>

Farmer usually opened his message to the leadership of these major companies commenting that, "I am sure you are as deeply troubled and moved as I by the recent brutalities in the south." Farmer immediately drew their attention to frontlines of civil rights activism. He also proclaimed that the support of America's largest business enterprises would allow them to advance the cause of the movement. Farmer wrote that,

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<sup>379</sup> Letter from Floyd Glinert to Marvin Rich, October 30, 1963; The list of companies CORE contacted regarding the album is based on the response letters sent from companies to CORE acknowledging Farmer's initial correspondence, Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967 (microfilm, series 5, reel 32), State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

“If a number of large corporations will do this---we can make a major stride toward freedom.” His letter to business executives served to not only introduce the details of the fundraising project, but it more importantly prodded them to consider what role they, and the companies they led, played in breaking down the barriers of segregation. Farmer’s comments invoked the language of partnership. He highlighted their shared concern for the violence civil rights activists faced in southern communities. He characterized making strides toward freedom as something that they—CORE and the American business community—could accomplish together.

Fostering corporations’ awareness of their role within the liberation struggle was especially valuable considering the sustained focus on increasing access to employment opportunities for black Americans. Participants at the August 1963 March on Washington voiced their concern for greater access to job opportunities as a major civil rights issue. Jazz music helped carry those concerns into the places where they could be most effectively and immediately addressed. Over two dozen companies responded to Farmer’s appeal for support.

The vast majority of response letters came from public relations managers, who acknowledged Farmer’s letter and the album, but declined the opportunity to purchase the record. Most companies explained that their policies forbid giving gifts to clients. Both the General Mills and General Time corporations expressed their desire to order ten albums each. Humphrey Sullivan, Public Relations Director for the Lever Brothers Company declined to buy the album on behalf of the company. Sullivan, however, said, “I know in my own case, as an old Chicago jazz fan, I intend to fill out the order form and get an album for my own collection.” Dan Rogers likewise declined to purchase the



record on behalf of American Home Products, but also wrote that, “we hope the album will prove a successful fund raiser for your work and so hasten the inevitable resolution of a problem that concerns all of us.” One of the most meaningful responses came from Proctor & Gamble. S.A. Shaddix, Proctor & Gamble’s Associate Director of Public Relations, while declining to purchase the record took time to describe the company’s progress in hiring more African American employee and their efforts to use greater numbers of African Americans in television commercials advertising the companies’ many products. The acknowledgement letters from these companies revealed that corporate America was in conversation with the liberation struggle. Jazz music, through *A Jazz Salute to Freedom*, helped start and sustain that dialogue.<sup>380</sup>

The fact that CORE adopted a strategy of action initially conceived within the jazz community demonstrates how influential the jazz community was as a liberation struggle movement center. Not only were civil rights activists turning to the new blues-rich hard bop jazz style for mental support and reprieve from direct action protest, they were also taking cues from politically engaged members of the jazz community in terms of how to grow support for the struggle. Musicians and producers like Max Roach, Abbey Lincoln, Art Blakey, and Nat Hentoff revealed the full political power the music possessed to other centers of civil rights activism, and did so despite considerable professional risk. Their overtly politically conscious albums, without question, helped spread awareness of the liberation struggle and its ideas. By working with the jazz community to produce and distribute *A Jazz Salute to Freedom* CORE directly shared the fruits of the music’s political labor. The jazz community remained at the forefront of

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<sup>380</sup> Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967 (microfilm, series 5, reel 32), State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

strategic protest innovation as the liberation struggle pushed forward into the mid-1960s. Against the backdrop of the legislative battle to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the jazz community, led by the efforts of Dizzy Gillespie, provided a parallel protest alternative to the important voter registration work in the deep south spearheaded by SNCC. The alternative political work Gillespie and the jazz community performed during 1963 and 1964 is the focus of the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

“‘I’M RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT, BECAUSE WE NEED ONE’: JAZZ, THE BLACK LIBERATION STRUGGLE, AND PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS, 1963-1964”<sup>381</sup>

Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1964, the day before over seventy million Americans cast their vote for President of the United States, fifteen jazz musicians spent their afternoon waging a small protest in front of the “Discotheque for LBJ.” Located near the corner of Second Avenue and Fifty-Fifth Street in Manhattan, the discotheque was one of the Johnson campaign’s strategies for attracting financial contributions from young voters. The musicians’ picket-line protest was a response to the Johnson campaign’s decision to use recorded music to entertain the discotheque’s patrons and campaign supporters. Their decision, saving costs in a climate where electoral viability was measured dollar by dollar, represented yet another elimination of an employment opportunity for musicians struggling to earn a living through live performance. A reporter covering the odd spectacle asked trumpet player Murray Rothstein, busy handing out leaflets to passers-by, if their picketing of Johnson implied that they supported the candidacy of Barry Goldwater, Johnson’s Republican opponent. Rothstein responded wryly, “I think that most are for Johnson, but we’re not sure he’s for us....” Rothstein then encouraged the journalist to ask some of the other demonstrators which candidate they planned on casting ballots for the following day. When the reporter posed the question to bassist Bill Crow, Crow answered, “Dizzy Gillespie...I think that Diz is the best of the candidates...But it’s important to stop Goldwater, and so I’m voting for Johnson.” Before returning to the circling picket-line Crow added, “But in my heart I know Diz is right.” The musicians’ intriguing display of civic participation and political

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<sup>381</sup> Art Seidenbaum, “Monterey Jazz Festival Swings---From Teagarden to Miles Davis,” *Los Angeles Times*, 22 September 1963.

expression drew national media attention as the event was recounted in newspapers from New York to Los Angeles, often with a headline reading, “In Their Hearts They Vote for Dizzy Gillespie.”<sup>382</sup>

At the center of Crow’s exchange with the journalist was John Birks “Dizzy” Gillespie’s campaign for President of the United States in the November 1964 general election. The “Gillespie for President” campaign, as it was called by supporters, originated as a publicity stunt. The Associated Booking Company, responsible for marketing Gillespie’s enormous talent, produced Gillespie presidential campaign paraphernalia in early 1963 hoping to cash-in on the public’s interest in the upcoming general election. Subsequently, events like the June 1963 assassination of civil rights activist Medgar Evers and the infamous September 1963 bombing of Birmingham’s 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church, began to transform otherwise comical Dizzy Gillespie campaign buttons and banners into something much more meaningful. The “Gillespie for President” campaign began to take on a life of its own, gaining momentum during the September 1963 Monterey Jazz Festival. As the road to the Democratic and Republican conventions began in early 1964, the Gillespie Campaign was rolling out a platform and his campaign’s support and credibility grew as the general election drew near.<sup>383</sup>

This chapter examines the fascinating narrative of Dizzy Gillespie’s 1963-1964 Presidential candidacy and campaign and its influences upon African American political activism. In doing so, it is important to recognize the distinction between Gillespie’s candidacy and his campaign. Gillespie, measured in terms of his likelihood of actual

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<sup>382</sup> Gay Talese, “In Their Hearts They Vote for Dizzy Gillespie,” *New York Times*, 3 November 1964, 22; Paul C. McGee, *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 12 November 1964, B6.

<sup>383</sup> Barry McRae, *Dizzy Gillespie* (New York: Universe Books, 1988), 84-5, Alyn Shipton, *Groovin’ High* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 322; Donald Maggin, *Dizzy* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 315.

electability, was never really more than a faux candidate. Only Gillespie's most ardent supporters, a significantly small group in relation to the entire United States electorate, actually believed that Gillespie had a real shot at capturing the Oval Office. It is doubtful that Gillespie himself believed in his electability. In a situation where most candidates effectively quit their day job to campaign full time, Gillespie did not stop performing or recording. It is worth noting, however, that some supporters made a genuine effort to have Gillespie's name added to the ballot as a general election candidate. In California over 1,000 names of registered voters were assembled on a petition to be submitted to the California Secretary of State. In other major urban centers like New York, Chicago, and Washington, DC, all cities with vibrant jazz scenes, there was an effort to organize support for Gillespie as a write-in candidate.<sup>384</sup> For the pragmatic majority of would-be Gillespie supporters, like Bill Crow, one less vote for Johnson meant that Goldwater's path to the White House was one step easier; as Crow said, "It's important to stop Goldwater." Gillespie's own short but sweet concession speech, "I never thought the time would come when I'd vote for Lyndon B., But I'd rather burn in hell, than vote for Barry G.," acknowledged this important point.<sup>385</sup>

In contrast to Gillespie's faux candidacy, his campaign, platform, and the unique philosophy and policy positions they offered the American public were very real.

Gillespie's vision for America's future path captured the hearts of many. For voters like Bill Crow, Gillespie's staunch commitment to programs and practices guaranteeing racial

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<sup>384</sup> "Gillespie Presidential Campaign Gathers California Momentum," *Down Beat*, 7 November 1963, 11.

<sup>385</sup> My understanding of Gillespie's platform draws heavily from Gillespie's autobiography (with Al Fraser) *To Be, Or Not...to Bop*. The text is a much more dynamic source for historical research because the book is really a composite of recollections detailing Gillespie's life. While Gillespie's voice is the dominant voice within the text it is by no means the only voice. The perspectives of Gillespie's fellow musicians, critics, and colleagues, including Jean Gleason, who served as Gillespie's campaign manager, are also preserved for readers, *Dizzy Gillespie, Al Fraser, To Be, or Not... to Bop* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 457.

equality and Gillespie's focus on expanding economic opportunities for hard-working Americans spoke directly to the type of policy they wanted to see in federal government. Changing the name of the White House to the "Blues House" was Gillespie's signature campaign pledge. The idea of the new name fused the cathartic and healing power of the blues with the nation's greatest symbol of federal government. Naming the executive residence the Blues House told voters like Crow that a vote for Dizzy would usher in a national government that could empathize with its citizens and help better their lives.

In many ways Gillespie's candidacy and campaign for the Presidency continued the effort to use jazz music to extend the reach of the civil rights activism that had been initiated by the overtly politically conscious albums of Roach, Lincoln, Blakey and CORE. Gillespie's run for the Presidency extended the effort to market protest from the marketplace for recorded music into the marketplace for live music, and sustained the work of expanding the liberation struggle, its philosophies, and goals into new social spaces. Gillespie's persona and music drew the ears and eyes of audiences. His candidacy, however unlikely, created opportunities to communicate with audiences in new ways. Discussion of his platform placed would-be jazz listeners, in search of relaxing entertainment, in direct engagement with African Americans' struggle for freedom from oppression. Gillespie's discussion of the struggle's goals and philosophies during live performances differed importantly from the dozens of jazz civil rights benefit concerts taking place during this period. Patrons of those events were well aware that ticket revenues were being donated to civil rights organizations, and they expected to hear remarks on civil rights activities from representatives of those organizations. Patron's purchasing tickets across the country to hear Gillespie perform came only with

the expectation of hearing great music. Gillespie's candidacy created an opportunity to confront the consciousnesses of people not immediately engaged with the social, economic, and political concerns of black Americans. Some listeners proved to be less comfortable than others with Gillespie's fusion of pleasure and black socio-politics. Gillespie's candidacy helped ensure that resolving the nation's race problem was an inescapable chore.

Gillespie's example highlights another dimension of the liberation struggle's response to the Johnson/Goldwater contest. In the context of courageous efforts of the 1964 Freedom Summer and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, examining Gillespie's activities reveals another path along which individuals were transformed into grass roots activists. Gillespie had connections to formal civil rights organizations including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), but his candidacy and campaign sprang from outside the walls of formal movement organizations. Just as college students engaging in sit-ins had access to movement resources, in their case flexible time commitments, Gillespie also had access to movement resources, namely his own music. Finally, the unique composition of ideas supporting Gillespie's policy positions demonstrate that for individuals outside of formal movement organizations the lines between political ideologies were significantly more fluid. Indeed, Gillespie drew from both integrationist and nationalist philosophies in his conception of America's future.

The transformation of the Associate Booking Company's publicity stunt into a genuine collaborative effort to effect change took place in a political climate and general

election whose outcome would shape the culture and identity of the United States for generations to come. The victor of the 1964 contest for the Presidency of the United States would lead in determining the nation's policy initiatives regarding the extension of Civil Rights for all American citizens, the future direction of America's Cold War policies, and how the United States would respond to an escalating crisis in Vietnam. The public's fears and anxieties related to the use of nuclear warfare were intimately connected to the latter two.

A great deal was at stake in the Presidential election of 1964. The contest and the issues driving it were framed by the positions of incumbent Democratic President Lyndon Johnson and his primary challenger Barry Goldwater, the Republican Senator from Arizona. Political analyst Stanley Kelley Jr. noted that in the contest taking shape between Johnson and Goldwater, "for the first time in many years the country faced the prospect of a campaign which would pit against each other candidates apparently committed to radically different philosophies of Government."<sup>386</sup> Veteran political journalist Theodore White, in his post-1964 election assessment, likewise noted that both Johnson and Goldwater ran on platforms based upon conflicting ideological positions. Johnson's "Great Society" called for a strengthening of the liberal state and the federal government's role in improving the lives of Americans; Goldwater's "Traditional Morality" called for its destruction. According to White, "...the two parties were debating the very nature of the American experience in this half of the century."<sup>387</sup>

The major political issues that would determine the future path of the American experience centered on how each candidate would respond to the rising tide of

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<sup>386</sup> Stanley Kelley Jr., "The Presidential Campaign," *The National Election of 1964*, Ed. Milton C. Cummings Jr. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 1966), 42-81, 42.

<sup>387</sup> Theodore White, *The Making of the President, 1964* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1965).



communism, the proliferation and use of nuclear weapons, the role of federal government, and race relations within the United States. White noted that during the campaign season the American electorate remained somewhat unclear on where the candidates stood in relation to these issues, largely because their platforms were expressed in the broad language of ideological perspectives as opposed to the specific language of concrete policy decisions. Voters' vague understanding of Goldwater's specific policy ideas was intensified by a series of ambiguous statements Goldwater made regarding his willingness to endow mid-level military field commanders the ability to use nuclear weapons at their discretion and comments implying that he would move to make future social security contributions voluntary. Goldwater was, however, much more clear regarding his perspectives on race relations and civil rights. The Arizona Senator attacked the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown* Decision in his 1960 conservative manifesto, *The Conscious of a Conservative*, and he cast his vote against the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which in many ways became the litmus test for candidates' stances on civil rights, the month before receiving the Republican Party's nomination.<sup>388</sup>

Race and Civil Rights were major issues shaping the American electorate's November decision. Public opinion polls revealed that "racial antagonism" represented one of the nation's two largest social and political problems. While Goldwater's policy stance on civil rights and race were clear, Johnson's stance was comparatively cloudy. Johnson's perspectives on civil rights evolved as he inherited the Presidency in 1963 in the wake of John F. Kennedy's November 1963 assassination. Johnson also assumed Kennedy's role as primary champion of the embattled Civil Rights Act within the federal government. Kennedy had introduced the Civil Rights Bill to Congress in June 1963.

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<sup>388</sup> White, 310-318.

Martin Luther King's non-violent civil rights demonstrations in Birmingham had triggered a backlash from white segregationist municipal authorities and local citizens so graphically violent that the Kennedy Administration was forced to intervene. While Kennedy may have introduced the bill to Congress, Johnson's astute political acumen was credited for helping to navigate the legislation through attempts to thwart its passage by members of Congress opposed the extension of civil rights to African Americans, including a near three-month filibuster by a contingent of Democratic Senators known as the "Southern Bloc." For the moment Johnson appeared to be a strong ally of the liberation struggle.<sup>389</sup>

Events surrounding the 1964 Atlantic City Democratic Party nominating convention called Johnson's allegiance into question. In a backroom decision made during the convention, Johnson brokered a political compromise that all but derailed over two years of civil rights activism. Beginning in 1962 Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activists, with the backing of the NAACP, CORE, and the SCLC, launched an effort to register and organize African American voters in rural Mississippi. Their brave work over the two years leading to the convention, culminating with the 1964 Freedom Summer project, registers thousands of black Mississippians within the newly formed Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). The MFDP provided Mississippi's black community with an alternative party apparatus from the already established Mississippi Democratic Party organization that actively sought to disenfranchise African American voters.

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<sup>389</sup> Kelley's assertion that racial antagonism was base on the findings of a May 1964 opinion poll conducted by the American Institute of Public Opinion, Kelley, Jr. "The Presidential Campaign," 43; White spends a good portion of his analysis of the 1964 Presidential Campaign describing his perspective on the significant influence civil rights activism held in shaping the course of the election, White, 173.

Over the course of 1964 the MFDP had grown strong enough in size and resolve to challenge the all-white pre-existing Mississippi democratic delegation's legitimacy as a participant in the nominating process before the convention's credentials committee. The MFDP petitioned the credentials committee and asked to be seated on the convention floor as voting members in the nominating process as opposed to the pre-existing all-white delegation, whose allegiance to Johnson was questionable at best. Instead of seating the entire MFDP, Johnson orchestrated a compromise that allowed for two members of the MFDP delegation to join the all-white regulars on the convention floor by taking at-large delegate seats. The coerced MFDP concession was the result of Johnson's capitulation to the united will of the other southern delegations who threatened to abandon the convention and the party if the MFDP delegation were seated. In the minds of an angered cadre of civil rights activists Johnson's commitment to civil rights was deteriorating. Civil rights activists could no longer count on Johnson, or the Democratic Party as a staunch ally in their struggle for liberation.<sup>390</sup>

Gillespie himself may have summarized the election's political climate best. In 1979, reflecting on the election and choice of candidates, Gillespie wrote, "Anyone coulda made a better president than the ones we had in those times, dillydallying about protecting blacks in the exercise of their civil and human rights and carrying on secret wars against people around the world."<sup>391</sup> Publicizing his own frustration with the Federal government's lack of progress on the civil rights agenda, and his dissatisfaction with the nation's relationship to the rising tide of communism, Gillespie indicated the need for an alternative, one that he was prepared to offer.

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<sup>390</sup> Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 123-127.

<sup>391</sup> Gillespie and Fraser, *To Be, Or Not...to Bop*, 453.

Gillespie's participation in the modern civil rights wave of the Black Liberation Struggle did not commence with the initiation of his candidacy and campaign. The roots of Gillespie's involvement in the movement ran deeper. Born in Cheraw, South Carolina, Gillespie came of age in an environment steeped in Jim Crow segregation. He was familiar with the economic exploitation of sharecropping. As a child he picked cotton to help contribute financially to his family during the depression. He could also bear witness to the south's climate of racial violence. Bill McNeil, Gillespie's childhood friend and band mate suddenly vanished. Rumors circulating within Cheraw's black community explained that McNeil had fallen victim to a lynching at the hands of a white mob who accused the McNeil of peeping into the window of a white home. While the weight of southern racial oppression may have psychologically damaged some black Americans it made Gillespie stronger. Reflecting upon his childhood experiences with race prejudice Gillespie recalled that, "They'd tell you that you were 'colored' and all that, but I never considered myself inferior to white people. No one could make me feel inferior. I would always fight."<sup>392</sup>

In June 1963 Dizzy Gillespie, along with several other prominent jazz figures, participated in a benefit concert in which he donated his time and talent to help raise bail money for Martin Luther King's SCLC demonstrators arrested in southern civil rights battlefronts. Organized by baseball legend Jackie Robinson and held on the lawn of his Connecticut home, the benefit concert generated nearly \$15,000 dollars and drew an audience of approximately 625 jazz fans and civil rights supporters.<sup>393</sup> CORE was also

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<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-18, 30.

<sup>393</sup> "Jazz at Jackie Robinson's Raises Civil Rights Funds," *New York Times*, 24 June 1963, 51. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics \$15,000 in 1963 has the same buying power as approximately \$107,000 in 2010.

putting Gillespie's jazz to work in an effort to raise funds for their activities. Gillespie's music was featured on CORE's *A Jazz Salute to Freedom*. Gillespie's "Paris Swing" and "Groovin' High" were major contributions to the record. Gillespie himself was also becoming increasingly politically vocal in the months leading up to the transformation in his candidacy and campaign. During a July appearance on a taped television program, *Youth Wants to Know*, Gillespie was asked about the potential consequences of a Congressional filibuster on civil rights legislation. Gillespie responded, "It's definite fact, that if there is a filibuster, there are going to be 200,000 to 300,000 marchers on Washington. And they will be lying on the Senate floor and in the Senate caucus room." Gillespie's comments on the show were picked up by the Associated Press and were included in an article alongside the voices and perspectives of a U.S. Deputy Attorney General and several members of the U.S. Senate. Both his voice and opinion were gaining in stature regarding civil rights issues. Perhaps the media's desire to quote Gillespie's voice was a result of the growing idea of Gillespie as a candidate for the Presidency. Just a few months earlier waiters, musicians, and others began to wear the campaign paraphernalia that the Associate Booking Company had created. For those people who missed the program, newspapers like the *Los Angeles Times* ran the Associated Press piece.<sup>394</sup>

### **Gillespie's Campaign Platform**

Dizzy Gillespie's campaign platform revolved around two primary issues: civil rights, representing his platform's domestic policy plank, and human rights, representing

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<sup>394</sup> "Demonstrations Cited in Civil Rights Speedup," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 July, 1963, 21; "Ray Charles Versus Box Office Records," *Chicago Defender*, 25 April 1963, 13.

his platform's foreign policy plank. Gillespie's ideas in both areas were saturated with comedic effect. Well-known for his signature wit and sense of humor, Gillespie turned these personality characteristics into one of his campaign platform's most valuable assets. Invoking humor to express his positions on serious social issues helped emotionally to disarm those opposed to his ideas and helped to make his message resonate in the minds and hearts of his constituents.

Gillespie's civil rights agenda primarily focused on expanding economic opportunity for African Americans. His civil rights economic policy was designed to guarantee equal employment opportunities and introduce a color blind hiring system. Gillespie humorously suggested, "The national labor relations board will rule that people applying for jobs have to wear sheets over their heads so bosses won't know what they are until after they have been hired." Simultaneously using wit to condemn the Klu Klux Klan, Gillespie declared that, "The sheets of course will all be colored."<sup>395</sup> Gillespie's vision offered Americans vulnerable to economic exploitation and racial terror the possibility of a fair chance at the opportunity that America had to offer. Gillespie's initiative to integrate American society did not stop at the workplace but extended to the far reaches of the Milky Way Galaxy. President Gillespie pledged to integrate outer-space by requiring NASA to launch a black astronaut into orbit.<sup>396</sup> The satirical hilarity of launching African Americans into space revealed Gillespie's deeper ideas regarding the level of gravity and commitment that the nation needed to take in its effort

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<sup>395</sup> Gillespie and Fraser, 457.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*, 455; The United States officially integrated space in the early 1980s when Guion Bluford, Jr., from Pennsylvania and fellow South Carolinian Ronald McNair participated in the NASA Challenger Missions. McNair was a member of the NASA crew that perished in the tragic 1986 Challenger shuttle explosion.

to integrate fully its social institutions, and signaled to the importance of passing the civil rights legislation that had been stalled in Congress.

Gillespie's platform also introduced policy initiatives that would mitigate some of the challenges civil rights organizations like the SCLC, CORE, and SNCC faced in their efforts to secure racial justice and equality. Gillespie committed to using his executive authority to disband the Federal Bureau of Investigation and demobilize their infamous domestic counter-intelligence program, COINTELPRO. Created in 1956, COINTELPRO was the FBI's primary tool for disrupting the activities of African American socio-political activism. The civil rights struggle for racial equality would be more effectively and expeditiously fought with the FBI and COINTELPRO out of the equation. Gillespie additionally promised to exert the full weight of the "Blues House" on efforts to demobilize and destroy the Klu Klux Klan. He promised to use his office to pressure the senate internal security committee to investigate "everything under white sheets for un-American activities."<sup>397</sup> Finally, Gillespie's campaign committed to dispensing poetic justice. He promised to appoint Mississippi's governor, Ross Barnett, to a federal position in the Congo. George Wallace, the infamous segregationist governor of Alabama, and for a brief moment one of Gillespie's rival candidates, would be deported to Vietnam. Gillespie seemed to believe that the experience of being a racial minority in a hostile environment abroad would help Barnett and Wallace view the Black Liberation Struggle more empathetically at home.<sup>398</sup>

While Dizzy Gillespie's candidacy and campaign were outgrowths of the integrationist philosophy of the civil rights activism he helped support in the past, the

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<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, 457.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, 455.

ideas in his platform revealed a blending of both integrationist and nationalist principles. The philosophical boundaries separating integrationist and nationalist thought, largely a consequence of conflict and debate between activists espousing each philosophy, were much more fluid in the mind of Gillespie, someone whose perspective was not bound by the walls of formal movement organizations. Drawing from the gaining momentum of nationalist ideology within the Black Liberation Struggle during the early 1960s, Gillespie incorporated the concept of self-determination and self-sufficiency into his platform. Gillespie advocated the formation of autonomous black co-operative businesses and companies if economic opportunity for African Americans could not be created in the existing capitalist structure. Gillespie declared, “I’m for people pooling their money and buying something. I’m for all that because if they’re not getting a fair shake – they are not getting a fair shake with white ownership – I think it’s no more than right that they should have it themselves.”<sup>399</sup> Nationalism, in Gillespie’s mind, was the next logical step in the progression of the struggle in the event that efforts to integrate failed. Gillespie argued that black populations in majority black geographic areas should be governed by black elected officials and representatives. He suggested, “All United States attorneys and judges in the south will be our people so we can get some redress. ‘One man - one vote – that’s our motto.’”<sup>400</sup> Gillespie’s motto echoed the “One Man, One Vote” slogan introduced by Bob Moses during SNCC’s April 1963 conference, a slogan that became the defining concept of SNCC’s voter registration work in Mississippi. In the context of an America in which racial terrorism ran unchecked by the “blind” system of impartiality, Gillespie seemed to subscribe to an essentialist view of the

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<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, 453.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*, 456.



legal system. Justice for African American citizens could be delivered only by African American judges, lawyers, and elected officials. The fact that Gillespie's campaign was a unique grassroots effort created the space for him to merge pragmatically integrationist and nationalist philosophies. The way Gillespie processed and assimilated these ideas in his platform demonstrated the way the African American public at large made sense of these so-called conflicting positions.<sup>401</sup>

Gillespie's campaign platform also reflected civil rights activists' growing concern with international human rights concerns. Civil rights and human rights were opposite sides of the same coin in Gillespie's view. In October 1963, only weeks after launching his campaign, Gillespie initiated a fight to desegregate a Chicago barbershop that openly denied African Americans service. He appealed Chicago's Human Rights Commission for support in his efforts to end the shop's discriminatory practices. Framing instances of *de facto* northern segregation as human rights issues bore fruit. Gillespie eventually received a haircut from the shop's white barber.<sup>402</sup>

Human rights and foreign policy were intertwined in Gillespie's platform. His regard for human rights was articulated through his proposed changes in the nation's Cold War policy, especially as it related to United States interaction with emerging communist nations, and the masses living within those nations. Gillespie's experiences performing across cultural boundaries instilled a strong sense of affinity with marginalized peoples across the globe. During the late 1940s Gillespie pioneered the social and cultural exchanges between Afro-Cuban and black American musicians as they collaboratively created Afro-Cuban Jazz. Gillespie had likewise bonded with the

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<sup>401</sup> Carson, *In Struggle*, 82.

<sup>402</sup> "On the Problem of Getting a Haircut," *Down Beat*, 24 October 1963, 13.

proletariat masses of the nations he visited while participating in the Jazz Ambassador program. While the State Department used his music to build alliances with political elites in nations including Pakistan and Turkey Gillespie fought with State Department officials to open his performances to the socially marginalized and poor citizens of those nations.<sup>403</sup>

Gillespie was in favor of re-establishing a diplomatic relationship with post-revolutionary communist Cuba. Gillespie respected the new Cuban government's rights, under the leadership of Fidel Castro, to nationalize its economy. Gillespie offered, "I think that any government has the privilege of nationalizing their wealth." Gillespie was more than willing to acknowledge this right, especially in light of the fact that Castro had mentioned the possibility of offering the United States some form of reparations for co-opting of its economic interests within the island nation.<sup>404</sup> Gillespie also promised to work towards "the diplomatic recognition of China; and an end to the war in Vietnam."<sup>405</sup>

Gillespie's proposed foreign policy, especially as it related to recognizing the legitimacy of communist nations, was rooted in ideas that went beyond simply protecting America's economic and political interests. The sanctity of human dignity was at stake in the foreign relations path the United States would pursue with communist nations. Gillespie's paramount concern was to ensure that the United States would adopt a foreign policy that recognized the humanity of the citizens of all nations. Under Gillespie's administration the practice of treating communist citizens as invisible objects relegated to the margins of a global battle to spread capitalist democracies would come to an abrupt halt. Commenting on American relations with Cuba, Gillespie stated, "I am a man to

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<sup>403</sup> Maggin, 215-224; Gillespie and Fraser, 417-422.

<sup>404</sup> *Down Beat*, 5 November 1964, pg. 14.

<sup>405</sup> Gillespie and Fraser, 458.

respect, to respect a country, Cuba, regardless of their political affiliations; they are *there*, and there's no doubt about it." Regarding recognizing China, Gillespie argued, "Can you imagine us thinking that 700,000,000 people are no people? How much percent is that of the world's population? I think we should recognize them."<sup>406</sup>

Finally, Gillespie offered a concept of national government whose international representation would largely be in the hands of jazz musicians. Gillespie suggested, "We're going to recall every U.S. ambassador except Chester Bowles and give the assignments to jazz musicians because they really, 'know where it is.'"<sup>407</sup> In Gillespie's mind jazz musicians were the ones best qualified to serve as the face of the United States in its relations with other countries. They were the ones who truly understood the meaning and functioning of a free, pluralist democracy. Many jazz musicians had been performing within such a structure since the development of bebop jazz in the mid-1940s. Bebop was distinct from earlier forms of jazz in its smaller band size, melodies based upon rapid musical riffs, and the significantly increased importance of improvisation. Gillespie was a pioneer of the new musical form. One of goals in developing the new music was to expand the musician's creative freedom within the organized structure of a jazz song. Reflecting upon his role in the development of the new jazz idiom, Dizzy Gillespie suggested, "I want to put freedom into music, the way I conceive it. It is free, but its organized freedom."<sup>408</sup> All musicians in Gillespie's conception of a bebop performance group would have the opportunity to express their individual creative voices, and that creativity led to the production of a superior musical product. Gillespie hoped to inject this principle into United States foreign relations, and implement a policy

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<sup>406</sup> *Down Beat*, 5 November 1964, pg. 14.

<sup>407</sup> Gillespie and Fraser, 457.

<sup>408</sup> Arthur Taylor, "Dizzy Gillespie," *Notes and Tones* (New York: Da Capo, 1977), 130.

in which global society would improve through recognizing the voices of all its citizens. It is worth noting that however “liberal” Gillespie’s platform might have appeared, it did offer some appeal to those swept up in the rising tide of republican conservatism; Gillespie pledged to eliminate the federal income tax.

### **Gillespie’s Campaign Trail**

Saturday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1963, from the main stage of the Monterey Jazz Festival, the transformation of a marketing stunt to a genuine effort to foster social change began. The 1963 Monterey festival was the first stop on Gillespie’s figurative campaign trail, a path along which Gillespie spread the reach of African American political activism. Gillespie’s campaign trail, his campaign stops and press coverage of those stops, provided the space in which Gillespie’s jazz performed political work. The charismatic trumpeter’s music and persona drew audiences and readerships that would be exposed to the goals of civil rights wave of the Black Liberation Struggle. When Dizzy Gillespie and his group took the stage for their evening performance, the trumpet virtuoso stepped before a microphone and loudly proclaimed, “I’m running for President, because we need one.” A record breaking crowd of over 30,000 patrons heard Gillespie’s declaration to run. Jazz fans who had gathered for leisurely enjoyment instantly became politically engaged constituents, as they now had to consider what direction Dizzy Gillespie might take the nation. In many ways the sixth annual Monterey jazz fest turned into a civil rights rally with Gillespie’s Presidential campaign becoming its organizing symbol. The grass roots actions of fans transformed Gillespie’s faux campaign into a serious social, if not political, movement. Booths were erected to sell concessions to

patrons with the profits donated to CORE. A group of jazz fans from San Francisco brought a homemade bed sheet banner displaying “Dizzy for President.” A young couple from Chicago, Ann and Peter Boekhoff, arrived at the festival with Gillespie campaign buttons to distribute to festival goers.<sup>409</sup>

Jazz vocalist and Gillespie supporter Jon Hendrix closed Gillespie’s Saturday evening session at Monterey by telling the audience, “Ladies and Gentleman, the Dizzy Gillespie campaign for President needs a campaign song...it is entitled, Vote Dizzy.”<sup>410</sup> Hendrix then sang,

“Vote Diz, Vote Diz, Vote Diz  
Vote for Diz, Vote for Diz  
He’ll show you where it is  
Vote Dizzy! Vote Dizzy!  
You want a good president who’s willing to run  
Vote Dizzy! Vote Dizzy!  
You wanna make government a barrel of fun  
Vote Dizzy! Vote Dizzy!  
Your politics oughta be a groovier thing  
Vote Dizzy! Vote Dizzy!  
So get a good president who’s willing to swing  
Vote Dizzy! Vote Dizzy!  
Show the Republic where it is  
Give them a democratic Diz, really he is  
Your political leaders spout a lot of hot air  
Vote Dizzy! Vote Dizzy!  
But Dizzy blows trumpet so you really don’t care  
Vote Dizzy! Vote Dizzy!  
You oughta spend your money in a groovier way  
---Every cent  
Get that badge of the People’s only candidate  
Dizzy for President”<sup>411</sup>

Jon Hendrix’s original lyrics, set to “Salt Peanuts,” the Gillespie-created melodic riff that is credited as the first bebop tune, told the Monterey audience that they could become

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<sup>409</sup> Art Seidenbaum, “Monterey Jazz Festival Swings---From Teagarden to Miles Davis,” *Los Angeles Times*, 22 September 1963, B; “Gillespie Presidential Campaign Gathers California Momentum,” *Down Beat*, 7 November 1963, 11.

<sup>410</sup> Dizzy Gillespie, *Dizzy for President*, Knit Classics KCR-3001.

<sup>411</sup> Gillespie and Fraser, 455, Gillespie campaign theme lyrics were written by jazz vocalist Jon Hendrix.

politically hip by voting for a candidate who was “willing to swing” for America. Hendrix’s lyrics also forced listeners to consider issues concerning the integrity and credibility of political leaders, hinting at Goldwater, Johnson, and their failure to articulate concretely their respective positions. Hendrix sang, “Your political leaders spout a lot of hot air...But Dizzy blows trumpet so you really don’t care.” Finally, suggesting that a vote for Dizzy would yield a “groovier” allocation of federal tax dollars, Hendrix proclaimed that Gillespie was the “People’s only candidate.” Hendrix suggested that Gillespie’s campaign reflected the needs of the voting, and not-able-to-vote masses, especially the black, southern, working-class. Ultimately, Hendrix’s campaign lyrics demonstrated his and Gillespie’s desire to see a configuration of national government that would be grounded in the expansion of civil and human rights. Hendrix sang, “Show the republic where it is, give them a democratic Diz, really he is.” Only under the leadership of Dizzy Gillespie, one of the grand architects of bebop—a democratic musical structure in which individual freedom was celebrated—could the nation begin to chart a positive, democratic course. Gillespie’s Monterey constituency’s stamp of approval can be measured in the magnitude of their resounding applause heard in the 1963 live recording, *Dizzy for President*, of Gillespie’s festival set.

The excitement over the announcement of Gillespie’s candidacy and Jon Hendrix’s catchy campaign song at Monterey drew the attention of the press, in jazz trade magazines and major newspapers. Press coverage helped spread awareness of Gillespie’s campaign, and more importantly, helped expand the reach of the movement to unusual and difficult to penetrate spaces. Readers expecting to examine coverage of musical entertainment were forced to grapple with the political issues that under girded

Gillespie's campaign, and to contemplate their relation to civil and human rights struggles. San Francisco based music writer Ralph Gleason, whose wife Jean became Gillespie's campaign manager, told the readers of the *San Francisco Chronicle* that the launch of the Gillespie campaign was the climax of a fantastic record-breaking weekend in profit and attendance.<sup>412</sup> *Los Angeles Times*' music critic Art Seidenbaum spread word throughout southern California that Dizzy Gillespie had entered the race for the Presidency. Seidenbaum drew his readers' attention to the significance of the "Gillespie for President Campaign." With the humor implicit in a Gillespie candidacy, Seidenbaum proclaimed, "The nomination is a joke but the social consciousness behind it isn't."<sup>413</sup> *Down Beat*, the leading jazz trade magazine of the moment, covered the 1963 Monterey Jazz Festival and featured a summary of the festival highlights written by the magazine's editor Don DeMichael. DeMichael's coverage recognized the primary role Gillespie's campaign played in the festival. Introducing Gillespie's candidacy as the "Dizzy Gillespie for President Movement" to the *Down Beat* readership, DeMichael offered special praise for Hendrix's campaign song. DeMichael reprinted some of the songs lyrics and told his readers that the "spirit" of what Hendrix's lyrics represented was important.<sup>414</sup> Regarding the subsequent interviews following the 1963 Monterey festival, Gillespie noted that, "We had a complete program and began developing a platform early on."<sup>415</sup> In the aftermath of the 1963 Monterey festival, the Gillespie for President Movement became increasingly organized. Its official headquarters was established at the Berkeley, California home of Jean and Ralph Gleason. Jean Gleason wrote to *Down*

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<sup>412</sup> Ralph Gleason, "Jazz at Monterey," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 September 1963, 39.

<sup>413</sup> Art Seidenbaum, "Monterey Jazz Festival Swings – From Teagarden to Miles Davis," *Los Angeles Times*, 22 September, 1963, B.

<sup>414</sup> Don DeMichael, "Monterey 1963: The Highlights," *Down Beat*, 7 November 1963, 15.

<sup>415</sup> Gillespie and Fraser, 456.

*Beat* thanking them for their coverage of Gillespie's campaign activities at Monterey. Suggesting that magazine's coverage had spread awareness of the Gillespie for President Movement across the country, she wrote, "I have been busy answering queries from all over the country from people who read the story in *Down Beat* and wrote in to ask if they could join the campaign." In Gleason's mind Gillespie's campaign was turning into an expanding grass roots movement fostering the social change that America needed.<sup>416</sup>

Not all jazz fans were open to the experiences of having their leisurely jazz listening experiences injected with African American political discourse. In October 1963, shortly after the official commencement of the Gillespie for President Movement, Gillespie confronted a jazz fan who attempted to silence the agency of his voice during a performance at a Midwestern jazz club. When Gillespie addressed his audience with comments between songs, a white male patron heckled, "never mind that – just play." Gillespie removed his signature horned rimmed glasses to get a better look at the gentleman sitting halfway towards the back of the club. Gillespie, with a smile concealing his anger, fired back, "You people been tellin' us what to do long enough. That's all been changed now. They changed that down at Birmingham." Invoking the activism of civil rights struggles in the South, Gillespie shattered the white patron's ability to view Gillespie as an object for musical entertainment. No longer would this heckler be able to enjoy African American cultural products while ignoring the social, political, and economic circumstances in which the African Americans who created them lived. The majority of the audience, almost equally composed of white and black listeners, applauded Gillespie's response in an offer of support. The heckler retorted, "Play your horn. That's what you're getting paid for." Gillespie used the heckler's reply

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<sup>416</sup> Jean Gleason, "Thanks from Candidate's GHQ," *Down Beat*, 19 December 1963, 8.



as an opportunity to launch into a discussion of his campaign platform. To the dismay of the heckler and his group Gillespie's set was transformed into a forum on the necessity of civil rights. The jazz club, an otherwise apolitical space, had instantly become politicized. Jazz music drew the club's audience and the Gillespie campaign provided the opportunity for Gillespie to confront this heckling dissenter with the agenda and goals of the movement. Above all else this occurrence demonstrated the political value that cultural production held within the movement. It provided a direct path to confront those standing in opposition to the expansion of African American rights. Returning to the performance, Gillespie introduced a song called *Kush*, written while on tour in Africa to memorialize the ancient African empire and present a sense of Pan-African Nationalism. Gillespie said, "It's called *Kush*, and it was inspired by the people of Africa." The heckler and his group sat in silence.<sup>417</sup>

Gillespie addressed several student and faculty audiences at schools in the bay area, in California, over the course of his campaign. In November 1963 over 150 students gathered at Raymond College to hear Gillespie speak and to ask questions of the candidate. One student posed a question that was very much a topic of debate within the jazz establishment. The question concerned the appropriateness of political expression in jazz, and if political expression compromised the transcending quality of the music. Gillespie's response was simple, "Jazz is suppose[d] to run the gamut of human experiences – anger, laughter, fun, and sadness." As the question and answer session shifted to discussion of Civil Rights, Gillespie suggested that one of the fundamental ideas behind his campaign was the rejection of "gradualism." Gillespie said, "Well, it can be done now, All we are asking is for the white people to obey their laws. They're

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<sup>417</sup> Harry Frost, "Dizzy and the Heckler," *Down Beat*, 10 October 1963, 24.

not our laws. If we are to get our freedom – and it’s not a gift – we want to get it now.”

Gillespie’s talk ended with his signature campaign promise to change the name and color of the White House.<sup>418</sup>

As the November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1964 Election Day grew closer, Gillespie’s campaign grew in strength and in recognition. At the 1964 Monterey Jazz festival the Gillespie campaign sponsored a booth. Art Seidenbaum reported, “the busiest booth on the grounds is the headquarters of the Dizzy Gillespie for President campaign. Described as the horn-in ticket, trumpeter Gillespie has his own bumper strips, banners, portrait sweatshirts and loyal followers.”<sup>419</sup> Recognition of Gillespie’s campaign was also gaining prominence within the jazz press. In the October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1964 issue of *Down Beat*, the editors announced that their entire November 5<sup>th</sup> issue would be dedicated to discussion of Gillespie’s campaign. They promised readers that an extended interview with the candidate Gillespie would highlight his critiques of Goldwater and Johnson as well as provide his detailed plans for solving the Vietnam crisis and the nation’s civil rights questions. Engagement with African American political activism was becoming unavoidable within the world of jazz music.<sup>420</sup>

In that November issue the Gillespie Presidential candidacy took center stage before the magazine’s readership. The cover page of *Down Beat* portrayed Gillespie at inauguration with a caption that read “Dizzy Gillespie for President (the Real Choice!).” The cover also promised to give readers insight into his platform and cabinet appointments. The cover story on the candidate riffed off the format of NBC’s popular

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<sup>418</sup> “Candidate Gillespie Lectures at College,” *Down Beat*, 21 November 1963, 12.

<sup>419</sup> Art Seidenbaum, “Jazz, Sun Heat Up Monterey Peninsula,” *Los Angeles Times*, 20 September, 1964, G1.

<sup>420</sup> “Dizzy for President,” *Down Beat*, 22 October 1964, 35.

political forum “Meet the Press.” Readers were given the opportunity to hear Gillespie’s views on the issues through a series of questions and answers. The first question fired at Gillespie asked what specific criticisms he had concerning the Republican and Democratic platforms. Gillespie’s response, however, offered a deeper approach to that concern. Gillespie remarked, “First things come first. First, civil rights. I think that some of the major civil rights organizations are on the wrong track. The real issue of civil rights is not the idea of discrimination in itself but the system that led to the discrimination.” The candidate then went on to suggest that the system responsible for racial discrimination was structured around the economic exploitation of African Americans and the institutionalization of inequality in the distribution of wealth. For Gillespie, “Economics was the key to the whole thing.” *Down Beat* readers were forced to consider whether structural changes in the nation’s political economy could effect change to a greater degree than demonstrations to integrate social institutions. Gillespie suggested that a nationwide boycott of one public company’s product by “right-thinking people” would exemplify the scale of activism needed to begin to initiate structural changes within the economy. Gillespie proposed a system based on color-blind hiring practices to alleviate discrimination. His color-blind plan was quite literal: he proposed that employment candidates be interviewed sitting behind a screen.<sup>421</sup>

Gillespie suggested to readers another root cause of discrimination -- the nation’s education system. For Gillespie the fact that black and white students attended segregated schools was less of a problem than the fact that the public education system failed to teach white youth the value of diversity and the importance of equality. Referring to the school system Gillespie argued, “They don’t teach the kids about the

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<sup>421</sup> “The Candidate Meets the Press,” *Down Beat*, 5 November 1964, 10.

dignity of *all* men everywhere. They say that there should be education. Okay. I say education yes; but the white people are the ones who should be educated into how to treat every man.” The *Down Beat* readership, majority white, were forced to assess their individual roles in the perpetuation of discrimination and their responsibility in dismantling it. The magazine’s readership also read Gillespie’s criticism of Johnson’s and Goldwater’s respective platforms, especially in relation to civil rights. Gillespie argued that Goldwater’s program was deplorable and was designed to socially regress the United States. He suggested that Johnson’s best ideas only addressed the ripple effects of social, political, and economic inequality, not their root causes.<sup>422</sup>

When the interviewer asked Gillespie to respond to the growing impression that a candidate’s financial wealth directly corresponded to the prospects of being elected, Gillespie’s response drew attention to New York’s governor Nelson Rockefeller’s reported expenditure of nearly two million dollars in the party primary. He suggested that if he could generate the volume of economic resources that Rockefeller did during the primary he would use that money to benefit the exploited working man.,

But I look at it this way; suppose I were a millionaire (that’s a very far fetched idea). And suppose there was a guy in trouble in some place, and I say here’s \$10,000 – with the television camera on me...if I were a poor man, say making \$75 a week, and I see this guy who’s ragged and doesn’t have any shoes on and his clothes are in tatters and I walk up to him and I say, ‘come here’. And I go to a second hand store and buy him \$6.79 worth of clothes. My idea of that is, I’ve done more by giving this guy this little gift. I call it having respect for, and having a big heart for, the little guy.

Not only did Gillespie provide a critique of campaign financing practices but more importantly he showed voters a notion of communal capitalism where all members of society could benefit from the rewards of capitalist profit.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> “The Candidate Meets the Press,” 10.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-14.

Ironically, *Down Beat* magazine's first and only annual election issue hit the newsstands the day after the general election. The magazine's readership cast their ballots the previous day without the benefit of the jazz candidate's final interview. Getting elected, however, was not Gillespie's goal, trying to effect change in American race relations was. The *Down Beat* election issue featuring Gillespie's platform was effective in that effort. Reflecting upon the significance of his campaign Gillespie once commented, "That's why I thought I would run for president, to take advantage of the voters and publicity that I'd receive to promote change. It wasn't just a publicity stunt. I made campaign speeches and mobilized people."<sup>424</sup> In many ways his efforts were successful. The Dizzy for President Movement emerged at a moment of national discourse on the expansion of civil rights. Gillespie's platform created an opportunity for him to contribute his own unique voice, one that blended integrationist and nationalist philosophies, to the discussion. Discussing the ideas within his platform along his figurative campaign trail helped to keep consideration of civil rights and human rights issues active in the minds of the listeners and readers he encountered.

The close of the election season did not mark the end of Gillespie's socio-political activism. Gillespie's activism, making use of jazz as a political resource, was changing with the times. A few months before the November election Gillespie wrote Duke Ellington querying Ellington's interest in joining him as a supporter of a Harlem based, youth centered, community organization called O'Pataki, which means "of great importance" in Yoruba. A non-profit organization designed to place a collective of black artists, across different genres, in interaction with black youth, O'Pataki provided Harlem's adolescents with arts training, a stronger sense of black cultural identity, and

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<sup>424</sup> Gillespie and Fraser, 453.

offered the entire community quality affordable entertainment. In the wake of the 1963-1964 campaign season, O’Pataki and Gillespie joined an emerging movement of activists using jazz music and other art forms to promote black self-sufficiency and self-determination, within the rising tide of the Black Power and Black Arts Movements.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>425</sup> Duke Ellington Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

## CONCLUSION

Dizzy Gillespie's transition from campaigning to keep civil rights concerns in the ears and minds of the jazz community to helping to organizing O'Pataki took place in the midst of another transitional moment in the Black Liberation Struggle. During the mid-1960s Black Nationalism began to re-emerge as the dominant ideological paradigm of the struggle. The integrationist ethos of the Civil Rights Movement wave was supplanted by a belief in collective self-help, self-determination, and black economic and political empowerment; all ideas that rested beneath the surface of Gillespie's integrationist ideological platform in the 1964 election. O'Pataki and its goals reflected the changing ideological and philosophical orientation of the struggle. Gillespie's new initiative sat on the front end of the emergent Black Power and Black Arts Movement waves of the struggle. While the specific moments of the Black Power Movement's initiation are debated, the movement, without question, had crystallized by the mid-1960s. The Black Power wave wrapped together new ideas and older ones—like armed self-defense and prideful race consciousness—that had been on the periphery of the Civil Rights wave to produce new patterns and structures of socio-political activism.

Culture and cultural production arguably played an even greater role during the Black Power/Black Arts waves than it had in earlier moments in the struggle. The political mobilization of jazz within the Black Liberation Struggle continued to evolve during the Black Power/Black Arts movement waves. Gillespie's O'Pataki was an early front-runner of a growing trend of jazz collective organizations forming in major urban centers with sizable black populations. Jazz collectives including Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, Los Angeles' Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra,

St. Louis' Black Arts Group, and New York's Black Arts Repertory Theatre School sought to use jazz—free jazz in particular—to foster a renewed sense of race consciousness and collective identity within inner city black communities.

The rise of jazz collectives in the mid-1960s reminds us how much jazz music's relationship with black collective activism had evolved over the course of the twentieth century struggle for liberation. The music that was initially kept at arms length because of its negative social reputation was quickly transformed into an invaluable political resource by a range New Negro activists situated across the spectrum of black political ideologies. Structural changes in nationalist, acculturationist, socialist, and communist organizations made the wide commercial appeal jazz enjoyed a sought after political resource, especially with respect to staging benefit shows. As jazz music's reputation began to be defined by its aesthetic merit, as opposed its alleged ability to corrupt moral virtue, New Negroes began too tout jazz as powerful evidence of black American achievement. As New Negroes adjusted their approaches towards activism to fit the World War II climate, jazz music became a pathway for black Americans to demonstrate patriotism and display their commitment to the war effort.

While the beginning of the Cold War and its domestic climate of political repression led to the decline of the New Negro wave and constricted radical New Negro activists' ability to mobilize jazz, it did create the space for the birth of a new Civil Rights Movement wave. Noticeable changes in the mobilization of jazz music accompanied the rising tide of the Civil Rights Movement. The music reinforced activists' mental and physical will to sustain non-violent direct action protest and provided an opportunity for activists to confront the consciousnesses of individuals that



ignored or opposed the struggles' philosophies and goals. The jazz community itself was transformed into an organizing center of civil rights activism as musicians, producers, and critics strategically mobilized jazz to help spread the reach of the struggle. Over the course of the New Negro and Civil Rights Movement waves jazz steadily moved from the edges of the liberation struggle towards its center. The role the music played in the formation of strategies of action continuously evolved.

This study's examination of the role that jazz played within twentieth century African American political history demonstrates that culture and cultural production, without question, played an important and meaningful role with in African American collective action. The mobilization of jazz music created opportunities for activists to construct and deploy a range of strategies of action that helped them accomplish the goals of the movements in which they participated. Examining the evolution of the political mobilization of jazz offers a new path in the exploration of the Black Liberation Struggle and how the struggle has changed over the course of the twentieth century. Critical shifts in the ways activists approached mobilizing jazz reflected significant moments of reconfiguration within the larger struggle and help demarcate lines of distinction between the liberation struggle's movement waves. Shifts in jazz's mobilization were initiated by activists' changing interpretation of liberation struggle political philosophies, goals, and the strategies and tactics they used to accomplish them. Evolutionary leaps in the political mobilization of jazz mirrored moments of rupture and resurgence in the entire liberation struggle, the beginning of the Cold War era being one of the most significant moments. The fact that jazz music was a constant and continuous part of the black socio-political landscape, allowing us to comparatively analyze the mobilization of jazz from

one movement wave of the struggle to the next, helps us understand how transformative moments of rupture, like the Cold War, were within the struggle. Remaining cognizant of these moments of rupture and their significance is necessary in a contemporary intellectual climate in which scholars are attempting to collapse the liberation struggle's movement waves into one protracted ideologically homogeneous period.

Jazz music's relationship with the struggle was in the process of crossing a new threshold within the context of a blossoming Black Power/Black Arts movement wave. The music's role within the struggle advanced beyond its use as a strategic resource. Jazz—and free jazz in particular—influenced Black Power and Black Arts activists' philosophical understanding of Black Nationalism. The structure of free jazz performance, allowing each individual musician to express their unique voice while collectively working together to create song, served as a working example of what liberation looked, felt, and sounded like. To date several strong studies of local jazz collectives have been introduced into jazz studies historiography, including Steven Isoardi's (2006) *Dark Tree: Jazz and Community Arts in Los Angeles*, Benjamin Looker's (2004) *Point From Which Creation Begins: the Black Artists' Group of St. Louis* and, George Lewis's (2008) *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music*. As the investigation of jazz music's relationship to the Black Liberation Struggle moves forward into the Black Power/Black Arts era it will be important for scholars to continue to recover other jazz collectives that operated within the major urban centers of black America. Guided by social movement theory, scholars will also need to ask if and how these local jazz collectives were interconnected with one another within the framework of a jazz collective movement.

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